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France talks with Hitler



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FRANCE TALKS WITH HITLER


FOREWORD BY
**HAROLD
NICOLSON
M.P.**

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**The story of the final struggle to
avoid war based on the diplomatic
documents contained in**

THE FRENCH 'YELLOW BOOK'

With 32 Unique Pictures



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FRANCE TALKS WITH HITLER.



*The Story of the Allies' struggle to avert
war, Based on the diplomatic documents
contained in the French Yellow Book*



Foreword by
HAROLD NICOLSON, M.P.

With 32 Illustrations

50th Thousand

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FOREWORD

THERE are two reasons why this abbreviation of the French "Yellow Book" should be of interest to British readers. In the first place it confirms, by a mass of corroborative evidence, the facts recorded in our own Blue Book and demonstrates once again how the pacific endeavours of the French and British Governments were invariably frustrated by Herr Hitler's hidden motive, namely his determination to obtain (whether by gradual guile or sudden force) the mastery of the Continent of Europe.

In the second place it adds to our knowledge and understanding of the factors, both personal and political, which led Germany to her final catastrophe. The despatches of the French representatives abroad, and notably those of Monsieur François-Poncet and Monsieur Coulondre, are written with the implicit irony, the stark precision and the deep psychological insight which are in the best tradition of French diplomacy. They enable us to view these events from an angle of observation which is different from our own angle, and thus to check our own conclusions by comparing them with those reached by very different minds. It is a striking fact that in each case the conclusions should have been identical.

The Germans have been even more enraged by the French "Yellow Book" than they were by the publication of our own documents. They had always tried to persuade the world that France for her part was willing to sacrifice Eastern Europe to German aggression provided only that no direct attack was made upon France herself. They had always contended (and still contend) that it was the brutal belligerent pressure of Mr. Chamberlain which forced France into war on Britain's behalf. It may be true that Herr Hitler (in his som-

nambulist certainty) really did imagine that he and Herr von Ribbentrop by their superior cunning had thrown dust into the eyes of Monsieur François-Poncet and Monsieur Coulondre, and had induced France to abandon the British and the Polish connections, and to purchase her own security at the cost of the stability of Europe. It must indeed be galling to Herr von Ribbentrop to find that the French Ambassadors and their Government were not for one moment deceived by his manœuvres. They knew very well that Herr Hitler was straining every nerve, and employing every stratagem, to separate London from Paris; they knew very well (and recorded their forecasts in icy sentences) that Germany was aiming at world-power and would not hesitate even to ally herself with Russia if only she could obtain her desires. It is interesting, as one reads these brilliant despatches, to watch the clumsy, insidious waves of German cunning beating in vain against the intelligence and loyalty of France. Our own Blue Book disclosed the violent purposes of Germany: the French "Yellow Book" displays the actual stupidity of their technique. Each is complementary to the other. Together they provide an indictment more overwhelming and more tragic than any collection of documents that history has known.

HAROLD NICOLSON.

I. WORDS OF HONOUR

THE French "Yellow Book" is a collection of the chief documents which record French diplomacy from September 29, 1938, to September 3, 1939; i.e. from Munich to the war.

It covers a wider period than the British Blue Book, which began with the occupation of Prague in March 1939.

It shows the complete unity of Anglo-French diplomacy, based on an equal solidarity of public opinion in both countries; in face of the persistent, calculated but unsuccessful effort on the part of Germany to divide them.

It gives a vivid picture of Hitler himself, in various moods; reasonable, raging, but never consistent.

It shows the deliberate betrayal by Germany of the Munich agreement.

It shows that the claim to Danzig was an excuse, gradually giving way to increased claims to the Corridor, and finally to the German determination to vassalize Poland.

It shows the inconsistency which led to the German Pact with Russia: Ribbentrop said—"The base of the Berlin-Rome axis is the fight against Bolshevism We will never come to an agreement with Bolshevik Russia."

The "Yellow Book" lets the German leaders speak in their own words—and contradict themselves.

The first section of the "Yellow Book," before we come to the interviews with Hitler himself, consists of eleven brief documents entitled "Germany's Word of Honour."

(July 11, 1936—March 12, 1938)

Austro-German Agreement of July 11, 1936

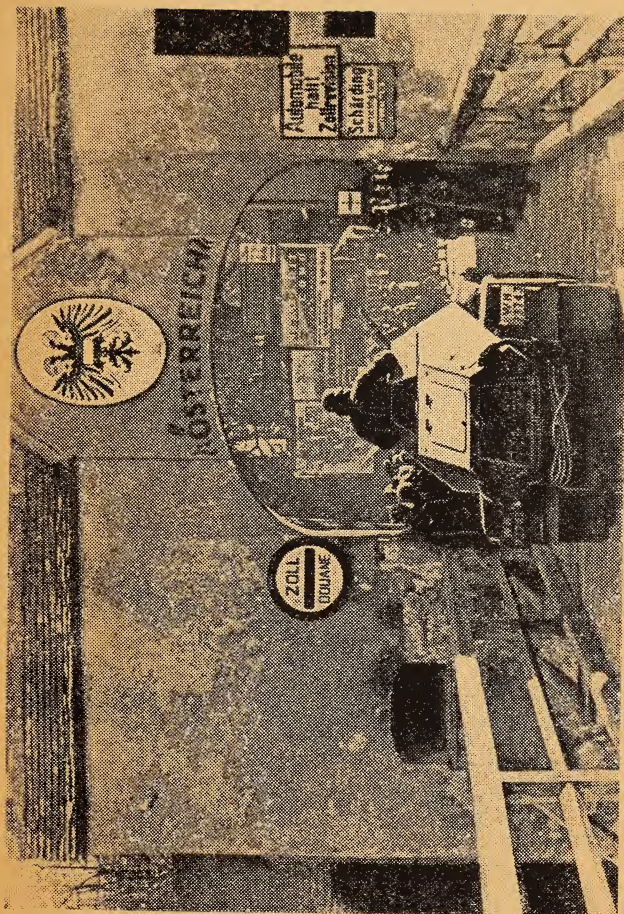
BEING convinced that they are making a valuable contribution towards the whole European development in the direction of maintaining peace, and in the belief that they are thereby best serving the manifold mutual interests of both German States, the Governments of the Federal State of Austria and of Germany have resolved to return to relations of a normal and friendly character. In this connection it is declared—

(1) The German Government recognizes the full sovereignty of the Federal State of Austria in the spirit of the pronouncements of the German Führer and Chancellor of May 21, 1935.

(2) Each of the two Governments regards the inner political order (including the question of Austrian national socialism) obtaining in the other country as an internal concern of that country, upon which it will exercise neither direct nor indirect influence.

(3) The Austrian Federal Government will constantly follow in its policy in general, and in particular towards Germany, a line in conformity with leading principles corresponding to the fact that Austria regards herself as a German State.

By such a decision neither the Rome Protocols of 1934 and their additions of 1936, nor the relationship of Austria to Italy and Hungary as partners in these protocols, is affected. Considering that the *détente* desired by both sides cannot become a reality unless certain preliminary conditions are fulfilled by the Governments of both countries, the Austrian Federal



[Central Press
"The German Government recognizes the full sovereignty of the Federal State
of Austria. . . ."

Government and the German Government will pass a number of special measures to bring about the requisite preliminary state of affairs.

M. PUAUX, French Minister in Vienna,
to M. YVON DELBOS, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Vienna, March 12, 1938.

THIS morning German troops crossed the frontier at Bregenz, Innsbruck, Kufstein, Braunau and Salzburg. In the latter town the German authorities have put under guard the Prince-Bishop, the Governor, and several prominent Catholic personalities.

Seventy aeroplanes have landed a battalion of the Wehrmacht at the Aspern aerodrome in Vienna.

Officers of the Wehrmacht, the S.A. and the S.S. arrived in Vienna during the night. German air squadrons are manœuvring above the city.

PUAUX.

II

(March 12—15, 1938)

M. FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. YVON DELBOS, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 12, 1938.

FIELD-MARSHAL GOERING, during a reception he gave last night, had a conversation with the Czechoslovak Minister. He gave assurances that Germany had no evil intentions whatever towards Czechoslovakia and that the latter State had therefore nothing to fear from the Reich, and he gave his word of honour to that effect. He then gave expression to the hope that Czechoslovakia would not mobilize.

Returning to his legation, M. Mastny informed Prague by telephone of Field-Marshal Goering's communication.



[Wide World Photos

“Field-Marshal Goering during a reception . . . gave his word of honour”

He then returned to the reception and informed the Minister-President that, after having established contact with his Government, he was in a position to assure him that Czechoslovakia would not mobilize. Field-Marshal Goering then repeated what he had said before, adding that he was not only speaking for himself, but in the name of the Führer, who, having absented himself from Berlin for a time, had placed all powers in his hands.

This morning, towards midday, Field-Marshal Goering called M. Mastny on the telephone. He informed him that the German troops had received orders to remain at 15 kilometres from the Czechoslovak frontier. M. Mastny replied that he took note of this, but that his Government felt it indispensable to take certain police measures on the frontiers of his country. Field-Marshal Goering replied that he had no objection to this.

The Czechoslovak Minister was again summoned yesterday at 5.30 p.m., by Baron von Neurath.

No doubt the conversation between M. Mastny and Field-Marshal Goering, which betrays Germany's anxiety lest her action should bring about the danger of a European war, has not been considered sufficient.

FRANÇOIS-PONCET.

M. FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. YVON DELBOS, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 12, 1938.

BARON VON NEURATH merely repeated to the Czechoslovak Minister, on behalf of the Führer, the pacifying assurances already given by Field-Marshal Goering.

The Czechoslovak Minister took the opportunity to declare that his country would remain perfectly calm, assured as it was of the loyalty of its Allies and of their support, should occasion arise.

FRANÇOIS-PONCET.

M. V. DE LACROIX, French Minister in Prague,
to M. YVON DELBOS, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Prague, March 12, 1938.

GERMANY'S violent action against Austria is naturally considered by M. Krofta as an exceedingly serious menace to the future of Czechoslovakia. But he does not believe that the danger is immediate. He is of the opinion that the German Government is afraid that an action against Czechoslovakia might lead to a general war, and the declarations made by Field-Marshal Goering to M. Mastny are a proof of this fear.

The Field-Marshal is said to have declared yesterday, at 11 p.m., to the Czechoslovak Minister that the Berlin Government considered what was happening in Austria as a family affair, but that its relations with Czechoslovakia were of an entirely different nature. Field-Marshal Goering gave his word of honour that that country would not be attacked by Germany.

The Field-Marshal is said to have repeated this undertaking a little later during the night, adding that this time he was doing so officially, as Herr Hitler, who was for the moment in retirement, had entrusted him with the direction of the State.

Finally, this morning, Field-Marshal Goering is said to have telephoned to M. Mastny that, in order to prevent any incidents, he had forbidden the German troops to approach within 15 kilometres of the Czechoslovak frontier, on the understanding that Czechoslovakia, on her side, should abstain from any interference in Austro-German affairs.

Yesterday, at 5 p.m., on an inquiry made by M. Eisenlohr, M. Krofta denied the rumour that the Prague Cabinet had ordered mobilization or was thinking of doing so. At the request of the German Minister, M. Krofta repeated this *démenti* during the night, and the newspapers have published it this morning. The Minister has also described as ridiculous the rumour that a great number of Austrian refugees have crossed the frontier into Czechoslovakia. It appears, in fact, that

there are in the country only between 90 and 100 refugees from Austria.

M. Krofta does not know whether they have returned to Austria. The Press has been advised to exercise great caution and moderation in commenting on the events.

LACROIX.

M. CORBIN, French Ambassador in London,
to M. YVON DELBOS, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

London, March 12, 1938.

THE Czechoslovak Minister has been received by Lord Halifax and has pleaded the necessity of a positive demonstration in favour of his country. He made the following suggestion.

Our Minister in Berlin, he said, has received the express assurance from Field-Marshal Goering that the Reich has no intention of encroaching upon the independence of Czechoslovakia. The German Minister in Prague has made the same declaration to M. Krofta.

Why, asked M. Masaryk, should not my Government inform the Foreign Office officially of this double declaration? This step would allow you to take official notice of it and then to address a note to Berlin in which the British Government would place on record the assurance given to Czechoslovakia.

Lord Halifax noted this suggestion and promised to put it before the Prime Minister.

CORBIN.

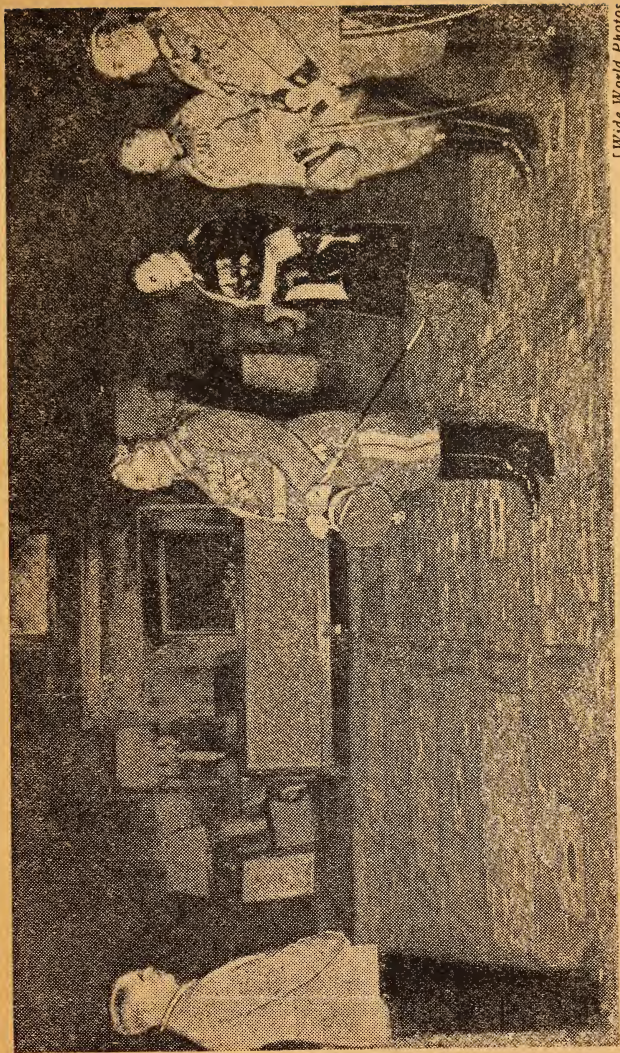
M. CORBIN, French Ambassador in London,
to M. PAUL-BONCOUR, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

London, March 13, 1938.

M. MASARYK, the Czechoslovak Minister, acting on instructions from his Government, handed to the Foreign Office this morning a note in the following terms:

"I have reported to my Government the interview which you were good enough to grant me to-day.

"I have in consequence been instructed by my



[Wide World Photos]

“He was not only speaking for himself, but in the name of the Führer”

Government to bring to the official knowledge of His Majesty's Government the following facts: Yesterday evening (the 11th March) Field-Marshal Goering made two separate statements to M. Mastny, the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, assuring him that the developments in Austria will in no way have any detrimental influence on the relations between the German Reich and Czechoslovakia, and emphasizing the continued earnest endeavour on the part of Germany to improve these mutual relations.

"In the first statement the Field-Marshal used the expression: 'I give you my word of honour.'

"In the second statement Field-Marshal Goering asserted that, having given his own word previously, he was now able to give the word of the head of the State, who had authorized him to take over temporarily his official duties. He then repeated the above assurances.

"To-day (the 12th March) Field-Marshal Goering asked M. Mastny to call on him, repeated yesterday's assurances and added that the German troops, marching into Austria, have strictest orders to keep at least 15 kilometres from the Czechoslovak frontier; at the same time he expressed the hope that no mobilization of the Czechoslovak army would take place.

"M. Mastny was in a position to give him definite and binding assurances on this subject, and to-day spoke with Baron von Neurath, who, among other things, assured him on behalf of Herr Hitler that Germany still considers herself bound by the German-Czechoslovak Arbitration Convention concluded at Locarno in October 1925.

"M. Mastny also saw to-day Herr von Mackensen, who assured him that the clarification of the Austrian situation will tend to improve German-Czechoslovak relations.

"The Government of the Czechoslovak Republic wish to assure His Majesty's Government that they are animated by the earnest and ardent desire to live in the



[Associated Press

Hitler leaves his Chancellery

best possible neighbourly relations with the German Reich. They cannot, however, fail to view with great apprehension the sequence of events in Austria between the date of the bilateral agreement between Germany and Austria (July 11, 1936) and yesterday (March 11, 1938)."

At the same time, M. Masaryk, speaking personally, expressed to Lord Halifax the hope that the British Government would inform Berlin, in any manner they might consider appropriate, but in an emphatic way, that they are aware of the assurances given by the Government of the Reich to Czechoslovakia.

The document translated above should, until further notice, be regarded as confidential.

CORBIN.

M. CORBIN, French Ambassador in London,
to M. PAUL-BONCOUR, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

London, March 14, 1938.

FOLLOWING on the letter addressed yesterday by the Czechoslovak Minister to Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador in Berlin received instructions to call on Field-Marshal Goering without delay, and to inform him of the communication of the Czechoslovak Government, drawing his attention particularly to the importance attached in London to the assurances mentioned therein, and to their full expectation that they would be respected. Sir Nevile Henderson was at the same time instructed to ask whether the British Government might publish the document, so as to mitigate to some extent the emotion caused among the public by the events in Austria.

The Czechoslovak Minister has just heard that the declarations made to M. Mastny have been confirmed to the British Ambassador by Field-Marshal Goering, and that Field-Marshal Goering had raised no objection whatever to their publication. His only reservations were in connection with the arbitration treaties, which,

he said, "concerned the Chancellor and Baron von Neurath," and the implications of which he professed not to be fully aware.

CORBIN.

EXTRACT from *Mr. Neville Chamberlain's speech in the House of Commons on March 14, 1938*

"I am informed that Field-Marshal Goering on March 11 gave a general assurance to the Czech Minister in Berlin—an assurance which he expressly renewed later on behalf of Herr Hitler—that it would be the earnest endeavour of the German Government to improve German-Czech relations. In particular, on March 12, Field-Marshal Goering informed the Czech Minister that German troops marching into Austria had received the strictest orders to keep at least 15 kilometres from the Czech frontier. On the same day the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin was assured by Baron von Neurath that Germany considered herself bound by the German-Czechoslovak Arbitration Convention of October 1925."

M. FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. PAUL-BONCOUR, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 15, 1938.

MR. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, before referring publicly in his speech of yesterday to the assurances given by Field-Marshal Goering concerning Czechoslovakia, had instructed the British Ambassador in Berlin to ask the Field-Marshal whether he would authorize this statement. The answer was in the affirmative.

Sir Nevile Henderson also received confirmation from Field-Marshal Goering and Baron von Neurath that Germany would, before the plebiscite of April 10, withdraw from Austria the troops which had been sent there.

FRANÇOIS-PONCET.

III

(September 26, 1938)

EXTRACT from *Herr Hitler's speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin, September 26, 1938*

"And now we are confronted with the last problem which must be solved and which shall be solved. It is the last territorial claim which I have to make in Europe, but it is a claim from which I will not swerve, and which I will satisfy, God willing. . . .

"I have but few things to say. I am grateful to Mr. Chamberlain for all his efforts, and I assured him that the German people want nothing but peace; but I also told him that I cannot extend any further the limits of our patience. I assured him, moreover, and I repeat it here, that when this problem is solved, there will be no more territorial problems for Germany in Europe; and I further assured him that from the moment when Czechoslovakia solves its problems, that is to say, when the Czechs have come to an arrangement with their other minorities, peacefully, without oppression, I shall no longer be interested in the Czech State. And this I guarantee. We don't want any Czechs at all."

2. HITLER SPEAKS

HITLER speaks in two brilliant despatches of M. François-Poncet, and in several of M. Coulondre, who succeeded M. François-Poncet as French Ambassador in Berlin.

The series of personal appearances ends with a moving interview at which M. Coulondre begged Hitler, in the name of humanity, to save the blood of women and children, as well as of soldiers, by settling the Danzig question peacefully. "It is useless," replied Hitler.

In October 1938 M. François-Poncet was about to leave Berlin for Rome. He saw Hitler.

M. FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, October 19, 1938.

THE Chancellor of the Reich gave me a farewell audience yesterday afternoon, not at Berchtesgaden, but in the eagle's eyrie which he has had built on a rocky spur 6,000 feet high with a view extending over the vast arena of mountains which surround Salzburg. The conversation, at which the Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs was present, soon assumed an interesting and important character.

Referring to the Munich Agreement, Herr Hitler expressed his regret that subsequent events had allowed a dangerous state of tension to continue between the Great Powers, and had not fulfilled his hopes. With regard to France, he took a rather indulgent attitude, but on the other hand he insisted bitterly on the fact that he could, so he said, discern in the British attitude the expression of a fundamental antagonism.

Endeavouring to moderate and correct his views, I tried more especially to explain to him the reasons for the currents of opinion in France and in England as a

result of the speech at Saarbrücken, and after the conclusion of an agreement which had saved peace, but at the price of heavy sacrifices.

The Chancellor declared in a general way that he was prepared to seek ways and means of improving existing conditions and to develop the potentialities of appeasement and conciliation which the Munich Agreement seemed to contain.

(1) Herr Hitler would consent to sign an agreement by which France and Germany would reciprocally recognize their existing frontiers and express their determination not to attempt to change them.

(2) For his part he believed that this text should be accompanied by an undertaking to hold mutual consultations on all questions likely to have repercussions on the relations between the two countries.

(3) Alluding to the problem of the limitation of armaments, Herr Hitler seemed extremely irritated and greatly impressed by the military measures announced in Great Britain and in the United States. He is of the opinion that, owing to the practical difficulties which would arise if a programme of disarmament were to be set up without further preliminaries, it would be wiser and more opportune to begin with a programme for the humanization of war (bombardment of open cities, etc.).

(4) Speaking of economic questions such as, for instance, the possibility of stabilizing the currencies, Herr Hitler recognizes both their importance and the difficulties they present. But he declared that, having little knowledge of these matters, he would gladly, if need be, have recourse to the services of experts.

At the end of this conversation, and in conclusion, the Chancellor asked the Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs to cause the different suggestions that had been examined in the course of the interview to be studied, and more or less detailed plans on their execution to be prepared. The texts thus drawn up would then be communicated to us for careful consideration and eventual correction and criticism.



M. François-Poncet (left foreground) meets Hitler

In view of the conversations I have had with Your Excellency, I took it upon myself to give the assurance that the French Government would consider with the greatest sympathy all proposals or suggestions favourably received by the Chancellor or initiated by him. We agreed that the preliminary study of these questions should remain confidential until further notice, it being understood that we would for our part ascertain the views of the British Government while Germany reserves the right to inform the Italian Government.

FRANÇOIS-PONCET.

M. FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, October 20, 1938.

WHEN on the evening of October 17, the German Chancellor asked me to see him as quickly as possible, he placed one of his private planes at my disposal. I therefore left by air for Berchtesgaden on the next day accompanied by Captain Stehlin. I arrived there towards three in the afternoon. From there a car took me not to the Obersalzberg villa where the Führer lives, but to an extraordinary place where he likes to spend his days when the weather is fine.

From a distance, the place looks like a kind of observatory or small hermitage perched up at a height of 6,000 feet on the highest point of a ridge of rock. The approach is by a winding road about nine miles long, boldly cut out of the rock; the boldness of its construction does as much credit to the ability of the engineer Todt as to the unremitting toil of the workmen who in three years completed this gigantic task. The road comes to an end in front of a long underground passage leading into the mountain, and closed by a heavy double door of bronze. At the far end of the underground passage a wide lift, panelled with sheets of copper, awaits the visitor. Through a vertical shaft of 330 feet cut right through the rock, it rises up to the

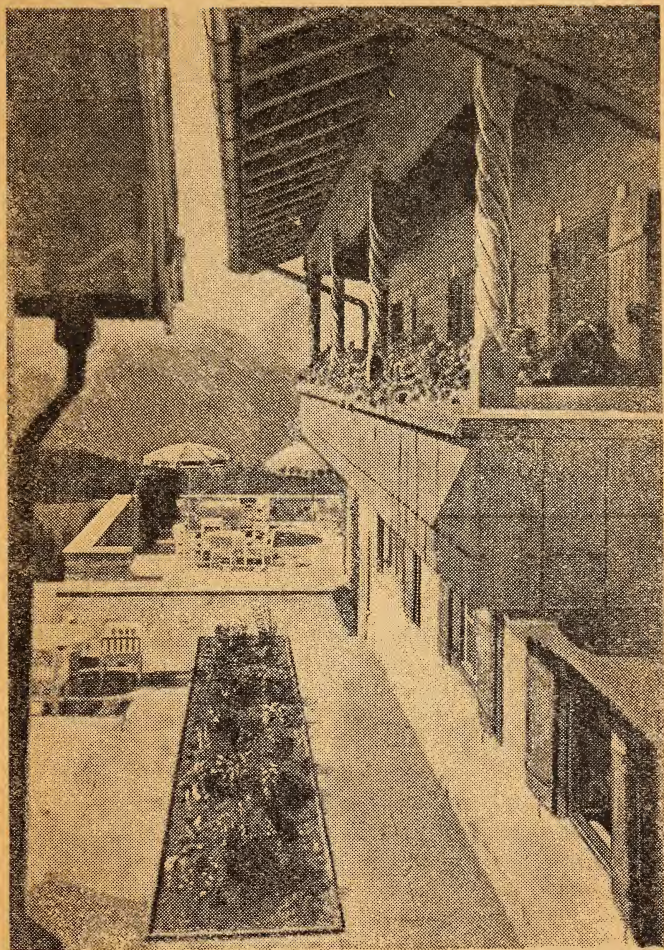


[Associated Press

“The French diplomats were not deceived”

level of the Chancellor's dwelling-place. Here is reached the astonishing climax. The visitor finds himself in a strong and massive building containing a gallery with Roman pillars, an immense circular hall with windows all round and a vast open fireplace where enormous logs are burning, a table surrounded by about thirty chairs, and opening out at the sides, several sitting-rooms, pleasantly furnished with comfortable arm-chairs. On every side, through the bay-windows, one can look as from a plane high in the air, on to an immense panorama of mountains. At the far end of a vast amphitheatre one can make out Salzburg and the surrounding villages, dominated, as far as the eye can reach, by a horizon of mountain ranges and peaks, by meadows and forests clinging to the slopes. In the immediate vicinity of the house, which gives the impression of being suspended in space, an almost overhanging wall of bare rock rises up abruptly. The whole, bathed in the twilight of an autumn evening, is grandiose, wild, almost hallucinating. The visitor wonders whether he is awake or dreaming. He would like to know where he is—whether this is the Castle of Monsalvat where lived the Knights of the Graal or a new Mount Athos sheltering the meditations of a cenobite, or the palace of Antinea rising up in the heart of the Atlas Mountains. Is it the materialization of one of those fantastic drawings with which Victor Hugo adorned the margins of his manuscript of *Les Burgraves*, the fantasy of a millionaire, or merely the refuge where brigands take their leisure and hoard their treasures? Is it the conception of a normal mind, or that of a man tormented by megalomania, by a haunting desire for domination and solitude, or merely that of a being in the grip of fear?

One detail cannot pass unnoticed, and is no less valuable than the rest for someone who tries to assess the psychology of Adolf Hitler: the approaches, the openings of the underground passage and the access to the house are manned by soldiers and protected by nests of machine-guns. . . .



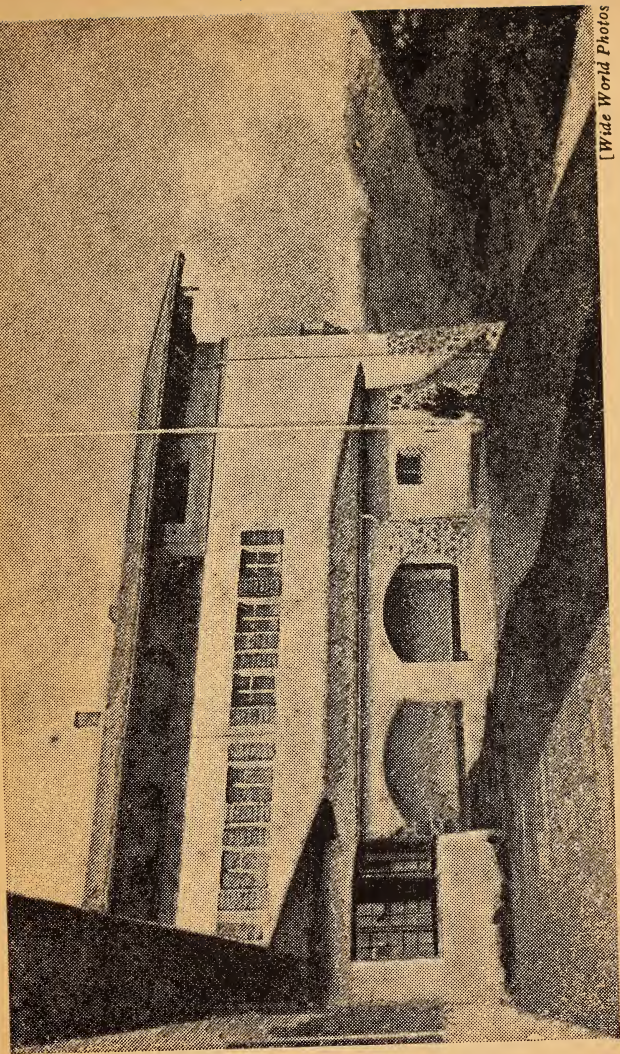
[Wide World Photos

"I left by air for Berchtesgaden"

The Chancellor received me amiably and courteously. He looks pale and tired. It is not one of his excitable days; he is rather in a period of relaxation. Immediately, he draws me towards the bay-windows of the great hall, shows me the landscape and enjoys the surprise and admiration that I make no effort to conceal. We exchange some compliments and a few polite phrases. At his order, the tea is served in one of the adjoining sitting-rooms. When the servants have left and the doors are closed, the conversation begins between the three of us; Herr von Ribbentrop intervenes only at rare intervals, and always to stress and emphasize the Führer's remarks.

Adolf Hitler is disappointed with the sequels of the Munich Agreement. He had believed that the meeting of the Four, which banished the spectre of war, would have marked the beginning of an era of conciliation and improved relations between nations. He cannot see that anything of the kind has occurred. The crisis is not over; it threatens, if the situation does not improve, to become worse within a short time. Great Britain is sonorous with threats and calls to arms. For the Chancellor this is an opportunity to utter, against that country, against her selfishness and her childish belief in the superiority of her rights over those of others, one of those tirades which he has already delivered several times in public.

The Chancellor's irritation calms down fairly quickly. I point out to him that after the joy at the preservation of peace, a reaction was inevitable; the realization of the sacrifices exacted from Czechoslovakia, the harsh treatment meted out to that country could not fail to stir the hearts and even to disturb the conscience of many people; and especially the Saarbrücken speech had spread the impression that all these sacrifices had been made in vain, that their only effect had been to increase the appetite of the Third Reich. This speech had considerably strengthened the position of the adversaries of the Munich Agreement.



[Wide World Photos

This is Hitler's Berghof. The "Eagle's Eyrie" is higher up

The Führer protests; he had not started the present trouble; the English had done so; he had not uttered a single word against France; and as to Czechoslovakia, it was not true that he had ill-treated her; all that he had done was to insist upon the rights of the German people, which had been trodden underfoot!

I interrupt his self-justification; we must not linger over the past, the future is more important; after the joy at the preservation of peace and the subsequent bitterness aroused by the sacrifices it exacted, a third stage is now reached. The statesmen must now with more self-control consider whether the Munich Agreement is only to be a fruitless episode or whether, now that experience has proved that the democracies and the totalitarian states can co-operate in promoting general appeasement, they will attempt to develop this first successful experiment into a larger enterprise and gradually lead back Europe towards more normal and enduring conditions.

Herr Hitler does not raise any objection. He declares that, as far as he is concerned, he is quite prepared to do this, and that he had asked me to visit him as much in order to be able to discuss this matter with me as to allow me to take my leave of him.

In my telegram of yesterday, I indicated in a sufficiently explicit manner the course the conversation then took. On the three points that were raised in turn, and which, taken as a whole, form a complete programme starting from Franco-German relations and widening to questions of importance to all the Powers, the Chancellor is full of arguments, objections and suggestions, like a man who has already considered the matter and is not being caught unaware.

As regards the suggestion of a written recognition by France and Germany of their common frontier and an agreement to hold consultations in all cases which might affect the relations of the two countries, Herr Hitler declares that he is ready to accept it immediately; actually, this appears to be the point which makes the

greatest appeal to him. He stresses the difficulties which might arise from a formula of non-aggression if it were accompanied by reservations relating to the Covenant of the League of Nations, or to the existence of pacts with a third party. He hopes that these difficulties may be removed, and he does not ask once that France should renounce her pact with Soviet Russia.

As to the problem of a limitation of armaments, he is undecided; he is not opposed to the principle of such a limitation, but he does not see by what means it can be put into practice; he outlines, without dwelling on it, the theory according to which Germany, situated in the centre of Europe and exposed to simultaneous attacks on several fronts, has no true equality of armaments unless she is superior in that respect to any of the states that could attack her; he also fears that if he were to speak of the limitation of armaments, the opposition in Great Britain would say that he was retreating before a display of British energy; his thoughts remain uncertain. On the other hand, he is ready to approach without hesitation the problem of the humanization of war and to go fairly far in this matter. He sees here a good introduction, a happy preface from which might arise a more favourable atmosphere for the ultimate examination of the disarmament question.

As to the monetary and economic problems, he obviously leaves to others the task of dealing with them. That is no business of his. He understands nevertheless that it is important not to leave these matters in abeyance, but to invite experts to take up again the work already begun and to examine the possibilities offered by present conditions.

Concluding the conversation, he gives Herr von Ribbentrop the order, as I have already said, to set his department to work and to make them study the suggestions arising out of our interview with a view to formulating concrete proposals. Paris will then study the drafts and state its own views. I promise that we shall receive his suggestions with earnest sympathy and

study them carefully, being moved by the same peaceful intentions that appear to animate the Führer. In the meantime, Germany will approach Italy. France, on her side, can investigate British views. We are not committed, on either side, to anything precise but both sides are agreed to proceed in all good faith to an investigation.

Therefore the utmost discretion should be maintained towards the public until further notice; public opinion must not be informed until the assurance of a positive result has been obtained.

On two other subjects I attempt to persuade the Führer to reveal his views: the claims of Hungary and the war in Spain.

He admits frankly that he considers the pretensions of the Hungarians excessive, although he adds that the cessions and concessions of the Slovaks are insufficient. For him, the only criterion is the ethnographical one, the race; it was the only one on which he based his claims towards the Czechs in tracing the new frontiers; the Hungarians and the Poles had better keep to these principles as well; obviously he has no sympathy with the efforts they are making to obtain a common frontier. The Chancellor boasts that he has brought about the failure of the appeal which Hungary had intended to make to the four Munich Powers. He believes that in so doing, he has avoided a definite danger.

"Such a conference," he says, "would have placed us before two conflicting theses. I should have been obliged, regardless of my personal opinion, to side with the Hungarians and Poles, because of the political ties that unite them to us; Mussolini would have acted in the same manner. You, however, and the English, for similar reasons, would have defended the Czechs. Thus, three weeks after Munich, we should again have had a conflict, which this time could not have been settled. I rendered a service to Europe in avoiding it. I preferred to exercise pressure on the Hungarians and the Czechs and persuade them to take up the interrupted negotiations, with less intransigence on both sides.



Wide World Photos

The Berchtesgaden country

Mussolini helped me. I hope that there will be a compromise. But the whole business is dangerous. This occasion shows how wrong France and England were to promise Czechoslovakia to guarantee her frontiers, even before the latter were clearly defined. This may still lead to most unpleasant complications."

With regard to Spain, the Chancellor repeats that he never had any intention of establishing himself there permanently. He had secured some economic advantages, but he would have obtained them in any case. It is far from his thoughts, so he assured me, to use Spain as a perpetual menace against France. Spain herself needs to maintain good relations with France. General Franco's attitude during the September crisis proved this plainly. Let all the foreign volunteers be withdrawn and let the two Spanish factions remain face to face with each other; in these conditions Franco will win in the end, and France will be none the worse for it.

For nearly two hours Herr Hitler has been readily listening to my questions; he has answered them without any embarrassment, with simplicity and—at least apparently—with candour. But the time has come to release him. Antinea's Castle is now submerged in the shadow that spreads over the valley and the mountains. I take my leave. The Führer expresses the wish that I might later return to Germany and come to visit him in a private capacity. He shakes both my hands several times. After going down in the lift and through the underground passage, I find the car waiting for me; passing through Berchtesgaden it takes me back to the airport, from where our plane starts immediately on its night flight to Berlin.

During the whole of our conversation, except for a few outbursts of violence when referring to England, the Führer was calm, moderate, conciliatory. One would have been justified in thinking that one was in the presence of a man with a well-balanced mind, rich in experience and wisdom, and wishing above all things to

establish the reign of peace among nations. There were moments when Herr Hitler spoke of Europe, of his feelings as a European, which are, he asserts, more genuine than those expressed so loudly by many people.

He spoke of our "white civilization" as of a very precious possession common to us all, which must be defended. He appeared sincerely shocked at the persistent antagonism which has remained after the Munich Agreement, and which the British attitude revealed to his mind with great clearness. Obviously, the possibility of a coming crisis and the eventual outbreak of a general war are ever present in his mind. Perhaps at heart he himself is sceptical as to his chances of preventing this tragedy? In any case, he seems willing to attempt to do so or he wishes to feel he has made the attempt so as to calm if not his own conscience, at least the conscience of his people. And it is through France that he thinks this attempt must be made.

I have no illusions whatever about Adolf Hitler's character. I know that he is changeable, dissembling, full of contradictions, uncertain. The same man with the debonair aspect, with a real fondness for the beauties of nature, who discussed reasonable ideas on European politics round the tea-table, is also capable of the worst frenzies, of the wildest exaltations and the most delirious ambitions. There are days when, standing before a globe of the world, he will overthrow nations, continents, geography and history, like a demiurge stricken with madness. At other moments, he dreams of being the hero of an everlasting peace, in which he would devote himself to the erection of the most magnificent monuments. The advances that he is prepared to make to France are dictated by a sentiment which he shares, at least intermittently, with the majority of his countrymen, namely the weariness of an age-long contest, and the desire to see it end at last; this feeling is now strengthened by the memories of the Munich interviews, by the sympathy that the person of President Daladier aroused in him, and also by the idea that our country's evolution

tends to make it easier for her to understand the Third Reich. But at the same time we may be certain that the Führer remains true to his wish to disintegrate the Franco-British bloc, and to stabilize peace in the west, so as to have a free hand in the east. What plans may be revolving already in his mind? Is it Poland, Russia, the Baltic States which, in his thoughts, will be called upon to pay the cost? Does he himself even know?

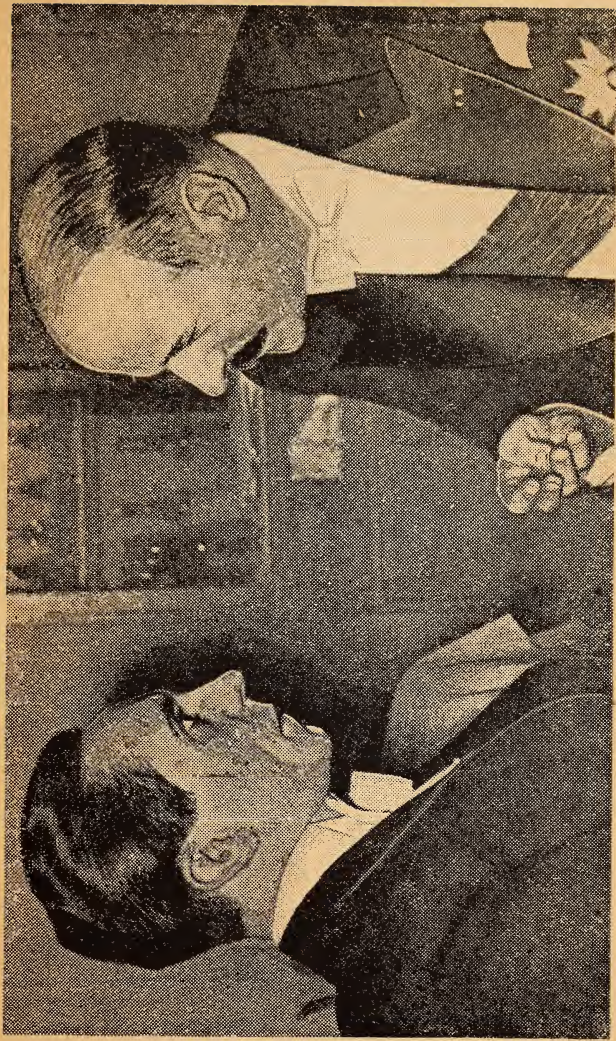
Be that as it may, Hitler is one of those men with whom one must never relax one's utmost vigilance, and whom one can only trust with reservations. Personally, I do not draw the conclusion that we should not listen to his suggestions. In these circumstances, as in many other previous ones, I hold that the main thing is that we should know exactly where we stand and with whom we are dealing. But it does not follow that an attitude of abstention and negation is the right one. Dr. Goebbels said recently, and not without reason, that one cannot win in a lottery if one does not take at least the risk of buying a ticket. It is our bounden duty not to neglect a single one of the ways that lead to peace. If it so happens that Herr Hitler, either as a feint or as a deliberate plan, engages himself far enough on that path, it is possible that he will end by not being able to turn back again, even if he wished.

Besides, who could predict the astounding changes of front of which this dictator, impressionable, mutable and abnormal, may be capable, and what will his personal destiny and that of Germany be to-morrow?

After the Munich conference, it was normal and necessary that one should think of expanding the results of an agreement on which public opinion had pinned such high hopes.

As matters stand to-day, Germany is expressing a wish to take the initiative; Germany is trying to work out a formula and a plan.

If we were to turn a deaf ear, we would, to our detriment, be providing her with the alibi which she wishes for perhaps in order to cover her future enterprises.



[Associated Press

M. Poncet talks to Goebbels

Besides, the contracts she appears ready to enter into have only a limited scope.

If these promises are kept, they will contribute in a large measure to the lessening of tension in Europe.

If they are broken, the guilty party will assume a moral responsibility which will weigh heavily on his future position.

France should, therefore, undertake to consider the proposals without fear. Perhaps it is not unreasonable to think that the events France has now lived through may have finally convinced her people of the pressing need for national order and cohesion, for a certain moral reform and for rapid and thorough overhauling and improvement of our military organization.

FRANÇOIS-PONCET.

Ten months later Hitler, in almost exactly the same words as he had used to M. François-Poncet about Czechoslovakia, assured M. Coulondre that "he did not want any conflict with France." By this time, Germany's "last territorial claim" had been settled—and more than settled. Czechoslovakia had been invaded. Now Hitler had another "claim"—the return of Danzig to the Reich, and a motor-road across the Corridor.

In these fatal days of late August, 1939, M. Daladier had made a personal appeal to Hitler. In a letter which was delivered to Hitler by hand, M. Daladier pointed out that the issue of war or peace lay solely in Hitler's hands.

"I personally guarantee," wrote M. Daladier, "the readiness of Poland throughout to have mutual recourse to methods of free conciliation, such as may be conceived between the Governments of two Sovereign Nations. I can conscientiously assure you that there is not a single grievance invoked by Germany against Poland, which cannot be submitted to such methods with a view to a friendly and just settlement."

M. Daladier established Hitler's own, personal responsibility.

"At the hour," he wrote, "in which you evoke the heaviest responsibility which two Chiefs of Government can ever assume, that of allowing the blood of two great peoples—who aspire only to peace and work—to flow, I owe it to you, I owe it to our two peoples to say that the fate of peace is still in your hands alone."

Five days later, Hitler's troops invaded Poland; but he had given his answer in an interview with M. Coulondre.

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, August 27, 1939. 12.15 a.m.
(Received at 4.30 a.m.)

I REGRET to have to report to Your Excellency that the proposal of Prime Minister Daladier has not been taken up by Chancellor Hitler. For forty minutes I commented upon the President's moving letter. I said everything that my heart as a man and a Frenchman could prompt to induce the Chancellor to agree to a supreme effort for a pacific settlement of the question of Danzig. I conjured him, in the name of history and for the sake of humanity, not to thrust aside this last chance. For the peace of his conscience, I begged him, who had built an empire without shedding blood, not to shed it now, not to shed the blood of soldiers nor that of women and children, without being absolutely certain that this could not be avoided. I confronted him with the terrible responsibilities that he would assume towards western civilization. I told him that his prestige is great enough outside Germany to remain undiminished even after a gesture of appeasement, the men who feared him would perhaps be astonished, but would admire him, mothers would bless him. Perhaps I moved him; but I did not prevail. His mind was made up.

Herr Hitler, after reading the Prime Minister's letter and paying tribute to the noble thoughts it expressed, told me that ever since Poland had had the English guarantee, it had become vain to seek to lead her to a sound comprehension of the situation. Poland's mind was set in morbid resistance. Poland knew that she was committing suicide, but was doing so telling herself that, thanks to the support of France and England, she would rise once more.

Besides, he added, things have now gone too far. No country having any regard for its honour could tolerate the Polish provocations. France, in Germany's place, would have already gone to war. No doubt there were some reasonable men in Warsaw, but the soldiery of that barbarous country had now broken loose. The central Government no longer had the situation in hand.

I laid stress on the importance of the French proposal: not only did M. Daladier undertake that Poland would agree to seek a solution by free conciliation, but he bound himself, with all the authority vested in his person, to work for the success of an attempt at pacific settlement.

Herr Hitler replied that he did not doubt the sentiments of M. Daladier and his sincere desire to save peace, but he thought that the advice of the Prime Minister to Warsaw, however pressing it might be, would not be listened to, for Poland was deaf since she had the British guarantee. Moreover, if Poland showed any willingness to talk matters over, it would, doubtless, be in order to gain time for her mobilization.

I returned many times to my point. I pointed out that Poland and Germany had not talked to one another for a long time, that in the course of the crisis the points of view might perhaps have drawn closer, that at any rate it was impossible to find this out unless conversations took place, and that both sides might refrain from taking any military measures while contacts were made.

"It is useless," Herr Hitler replied to me. "Poland would not give up Danzig; and it is my will that Danzig,

as one of the ports of the Reich, should return to Germany."

In face of the impossibility of breaking down Herr Hitler's resistance, and after having invoked the arguments of sentiment reported at the beginning of this telegram, I thought I ought to leave the door ajar by expressing the hope that the Führer had not said his last word.

COULONDRE.

A few days later, while Germany's troops ravaged Poland and her aeroplanes bombed Warsaw, Hitler spoke before the Reichstag. He said:

"I have already declared that I asked nothing and that I would never ask anything of the Western Powers. That is a declaration which may be taken as definitive. . . ."

3. MUNICH TO MARCH

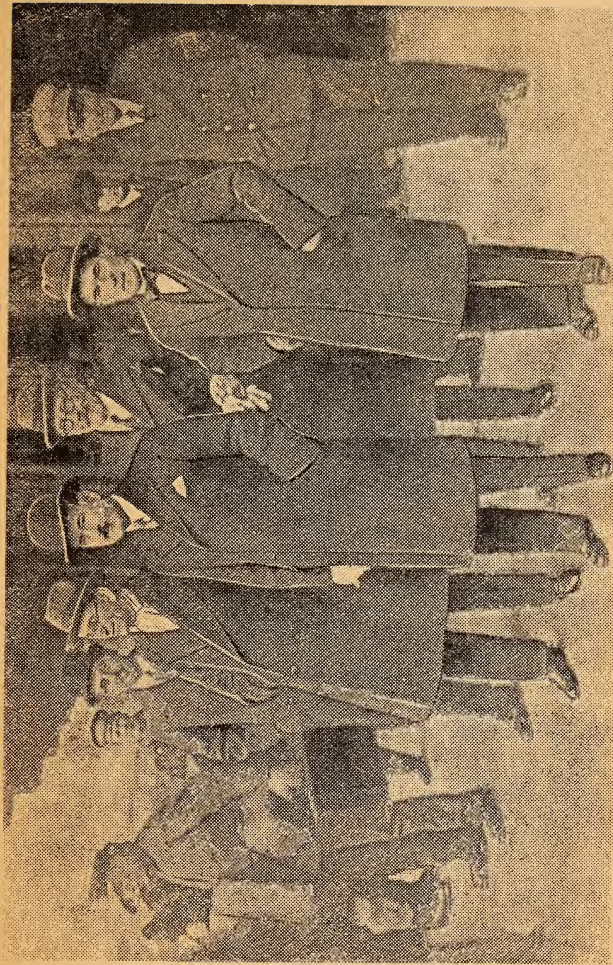
ALTHOUGH M. Poncet had no illusion about Hitler's motives—which were “to divide Great Britain and France, and to gain a free hand in the east”—he had advised France to “buy a ticket” in the lottery of Germany's proffered friendship.

France, accordingly, entered into negotiations for a “declaration” providing for a mutual guarantee of frontiers, and consultation between the two countries in case of difficulties likely to lead to war.

At the same time, France was careful to insist that Anglo-French unity could, in no circumstances, be affected. The assurances given on this point were numerous, and ought to have left no doubt in the minds of Germany's leaders. M. Bonnet, for example, who was then Foreign Minister, wrote to the French Ambassador in London:

“I took the responsibility, in the course of my conversations with Herr von Ribbentrop, of stating in the clearest way the character and extent of Franco-British solidarity, and its fundamental importance in the direction of French policy. . . . I left no shadow of doubt in the German Minister's mind about the impossibility of Germany's speculating on an eventual dissociation between France and Great Britain. . . . Every effort to develop Franco-German relations seemed to me vain, in fact, without a corresponding effort to ameliorate relations between Germany and Great Britain.”

Great Britain, moreover, made it clear that any *rapprochement* between Paris and Berlin would be welcomed, in the true spirit of conciliation in which it appeared to be offered.



[Wide World Photos]
M. Coulondre has arrived. (M. Poncet in bowler-hat, M. Coulondre on his left in a bow tie)

M. CORBIN, French Ambassador in London,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
London, December 12, 1938.

IN answer to a question put by Mr. Arthur Henderson, the Prime Minister declared in the House of Commons this afternoon:

“His Majesty’s Government welcome the conclusion of the Franco-German agreement with great satisfaction, and the French Government was so informed when it communicated, on November 24, the terms of the declaration to His Majesty’s Government.”

A member of the Labour Party then asked Mr. Chamberlain whether the Franco-German declaration, in its bearing on the frontiers of France and the Reich, would in any way affect the obligations of Great Britain under the Treaty of Locarno. Mr. Chamberlain answered in the negative.

CORBIN.

Whatever their motives, the German leaders were enthusiastic about the proposed Franco-German “declaration.”

M. FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, October 24, 1938.

IN the course of a conversation, during a farewell luncheon which he was giving for me, Field-Marshal Goering declared that he was very much in favour of the projected plans; he appeared very optimistic as to their realization, and it seems that he himself will see that they are carried out without delay. Herr von Ribbentrop, so Field-Marshal Goering assured me, was also, as well as the Chancellor, favourably disposed and would use all his efforts to further the projects.

I have also had a conversation on the subject with Herr Gauss, to whom the preparation of the drafts has been entrusted; he had been summoned to Berchtesgaden, after my visit to the Chancellor.

FRANÇOIS-PONCET.

The Führer himself was more than conciliating. M. Coulondre had arrived.

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, November 23, 1938.

YESTERDAY, at Berchtesgaden, I presented my credentials to the Chancellor of the Reich.

The Führer received me affably in his simple and elegant dwelling of the Berghof.

After we had exchanged the usual speeches, he conversed with me for half an hour, and, contrary to his habit—for usually he does not mention politics in the course of these formal visits—he almost immediately attacked the problem of Franco-German relations.

"These relations," the Führer said, "I wish to see peaceable and pleasant, and I see no reason why they should not be so. There is no cause for conflict between Germany and France." He then looked at me insistently, but without trace of harshness, and added, "I hope, in any case, should difficulties arise, that you will do your utmost to smooth them out, in the same spirit as your predecessor and with the same sincerity."

The substance of my reply was that I was bringing with me a certainty and a hope. The certainty of the absolute sincerity dictated by my conscience and by my fervent patriotism. (Here Herr Hitler signified his approval by nodding his head with vivacity.)

I continued: "The hope is that of an effective and enduring *rapprochement* between the two nations. I have gained this hope both from your speeches, which I have recently read over again, and through which the word 'reconciliation' seemed to shine as a gleam of light as well as from the dispositions evident in France. During my last stay in my country, when I returned from Moscow, I gathered in the most varied circles precise indications that have convinced me of the fact that the vast majority of the French nation wishes for a *rapprochement* with Germany. France was profoundly

stirred by the September crisis; like the German nation, she touched the fringe of war, and like the German people, our people have expressed their gratitude to the leader who preserved them from war. They look upon the Munich Agreement as a possibility for opening up a path for a policy of reconciliation, and they wonder whether France and Germany might not in the end reach a mutual understanding, once and for all time, so as to avoid the possibility of a repetition of such a menace."

I concluded that it was the task of the Governments to answer this question, and I alluded to the last conversation of M. François-Poncet with the Führer.

Herr Hitler assured me that he shared these feelings, that he, on his side, was anxious without delay to translate into action the good intentions he had expressed to my predecessor, and he repeated that no territorial question remained in suspense between France and Germany.

I then stressed the importance, in order to start the two countries on the path of reconciliation and collaboration, of not delaying too long the first manifestation of the mutual goodwill of the two Governments, otherwise we ran this danger, that the effects of the psychological shock caused by the September crisis would fade out like a photograph which had not been fixed.

The Führer smiled and agreed, then he became more animated, his tone warmed up and he said: "I am an ex-Serviceman, I know what war is. I want to spare my people these trials; even an alteration of the frontier between our two countries would not be sufficient justification for the sacrifices it would entail. That is my opinion, and I know it is also that of President Daladier."

Herr Hitler then bade me good-bye after adding while shaking hands: "We are both ex-Servicemen; if ever difficulties should arise, we will find a way of solving them peacefully."

It is in that spirit, with which the mysticism of the National-Socialist régime is so largely permeated, that



M. Coulondre leaves the Chancellery [Associated Press

as soon as I got back to Berlin, I laid a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Warrior of Germany.

At the luncheon which, after I had been received by the Chancellor, was offered to me by Herr Meissner, Minister of the Reich Chancellery, Herr Hitler's intimates evinced satisfaction at the progress of the conversations, which had gone far beyond a mere expression of courtesy. A high official whom I have known for twenty years said to me: "From this you can infer the Führer's state of mind."

The Counsellor and the Military Attaché of this Embassy had accompanied me to Berchtesgaden. During the whole journey we were the guests of the Government of the Reich, and the German authorities did their utmost to show us attentions and courtesy.

COULONDRE.

On the following day the German D.N.B. Agency announced that Ribbentrop would shortly visit Paris to sign a Franco-German agreement.

It soon became clear, however, where all this enthusiasm was leading. Germany—just as M. Poncet had foreseen—regarded the French pact merely as giving her a free hand in the east. France had "bought her ticket" in the lottery of Germany's friendly assurances, but it became increasingly doubtful if there was a prize. Or rather, it became plain that there were two prizes, but that both were reserved for Germany. The first was Czechoslovakia; and the second was Poland.

JUST "A GUARANTEE"

THE test of Germany's intentions, by which it became increasingly clear that neither at Munich nor by signing the Franco-German "declaration" did Germany mean peace in the west, but rather war in the east, was the "international guarantee" of Czechoslovakia's new frontiers.

It had been agreed at Munich that such a guarantee

should be given by Germany, as well as by France, Great Britain and Italy.

Germany's answers, when she was urged to carry out this agreement, were at first evasive and—at the last—brutally frank. It was the typical Hitlerite technique of prevarication followed at the last moment by the revelation of a totally new point of view.

When Ribbentrop went to Paris to sign the Franco-German "declaration" on December 6, 1938, M. Bonnet seized the opportunity to urge that Germany should carry out her promise, and guarantee the Czechoslovak frontiers. Ribbentrop, whose unfriendliness towards Britain had produced a momentary effusiveness towards France by which the French ministers (as the despatches show) were not deceived, undertook to "re-examine the question." The conversation, in other ways, had not been uninteresting.

M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
to the French Ambassadors in London, Berlin,
Brussels, Rome and Barcelona, and to the French
Minister in Prague.

Paris, December 14, 1938.

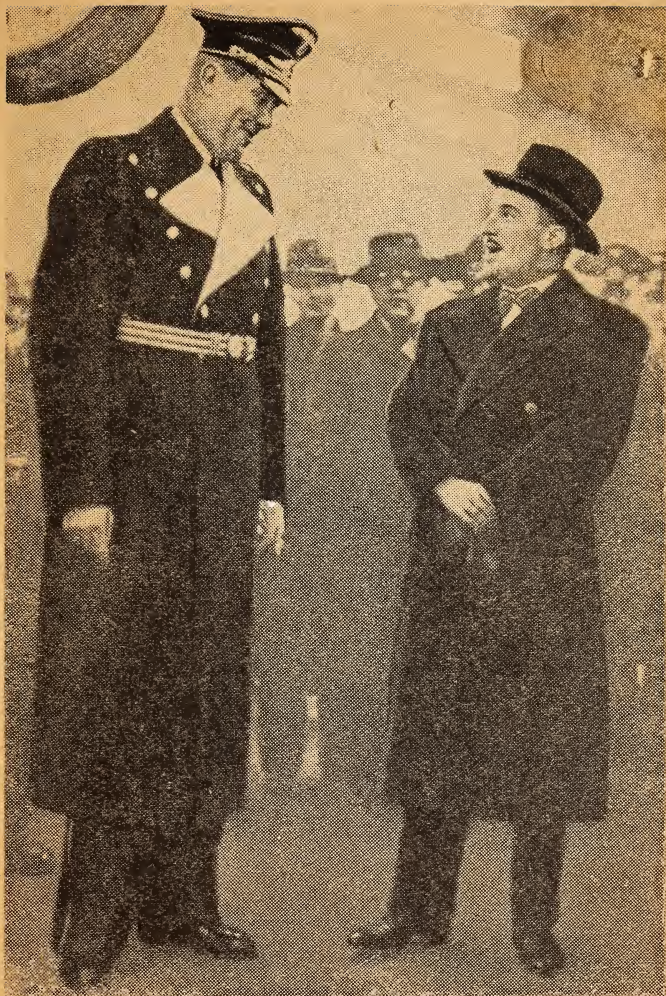
HERR VON RIBBENTROP'S visit to Paris was undertaken for the express and sufficient object of signing the Franco-German declaration. Nevertheless, it has provided an opportunity for a wide exchange of views between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries. Although these conversations on the whole retained a very general character, they have made it possible to obtain definite information on the German attitude regarding some particularly important international questions.

The anti-French incidents that have recently occurred in Italy naturally gave rise to the question of Franco-Italian and German-Italian relations, and I expressed the wish to see every element incompatible with the pursuance of a policy of Franco-German appeasement disappear from the relations between Paris, Berlin and

Rome. Referring to the solidarity between Germany and Italy similar, he said, to that uniting France and Great Britain, Herr von Ribbentrop was at pains to assure me that nothing in the existence of these two groups appeared to him to prejudice any attempt to bring into harmony the relations between the four Powers, which might eventually extend to an arrangement for co-operation between the two Axes. By indicating that the struggle against Bolshevism is the basis of the common political views of the German and Italian Governments, but without saying so openly, Herr von Ribbentrop wished to convey to us the impression that no other aim could be attributed to it. The recent demonstration in the Italian Chamber of Deputies, which in his opinion involved no government responsibility, appears to have made no particular impression on the German Minister, who affects in the circumstances to consider the Mediterranean questions involved as outside the scope of German interests; in any case he persists in declaring himself convinced that the improvement of Franco-German relations is of a nature to exert a favourable influence on future Franco-Italian relations.

Concerning Spain, he gave us to understand that there again the action of Germany had from the beginning been inspired solely by the struggle against Bolshevism. The German Minister continues to desire the victory of General Franco, as, in his opinion, it would be a guarantee for the re-establishment in Spain of a national order which would favour a general resumption of commercial relations with that country, without prejudice to the interests of France. Moreover, he does not believe in the possibility of mediation. He did not then dispute the propriety of the position maintained by France as well as by Great Britain regarding the application of the decisions of the Non-Intervention Committee.

These considerations incidentally led the Foreign Minister of the Reich to raise the question of French policy towards the U.S.S.R., without, however, laying any particular stress upon it and only with a view to



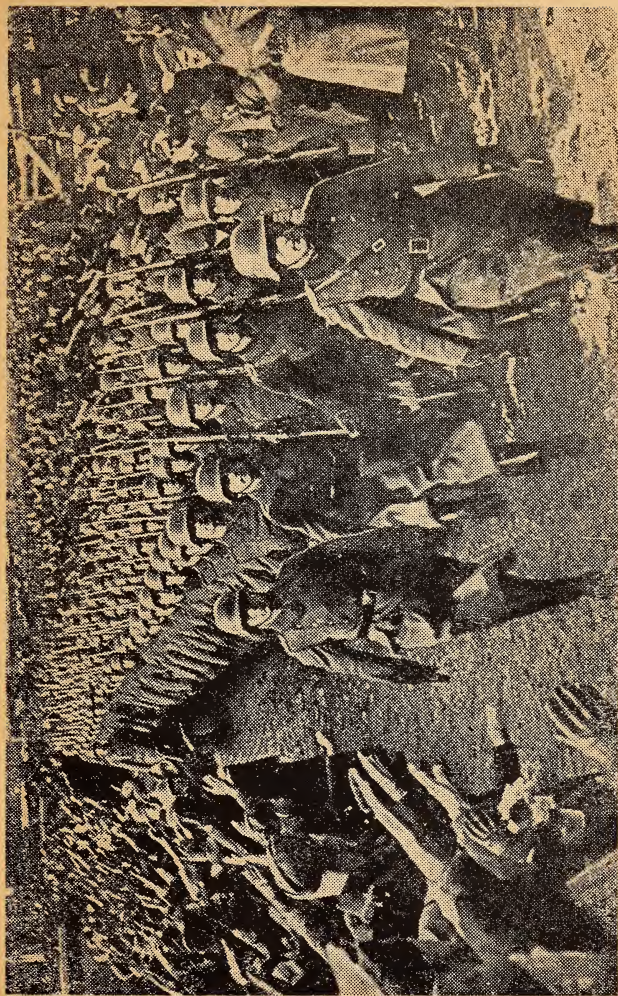
[Wide World Photos

M. Coulondre is dwarfed by the German Chief of the Protocols
(but only physically!)

informing himself of the position. This policy appeared to him to be a survival of the encirclement policy of Versailles. I had to remind him that the Franco-Russian pact was not originally meant to remain only bilateral, that it had been and still was conceived as an element of collective agreement, in which Germany and other Powers had been invited to participate, and that it was the fault neither of France nor of the U.S.S.R. if it had actually developed into an apparently purely Franco-Soviet affair.

With regard to Great Britain, I stressed to Herr von Ribbentrop the part that the improvement of Anglo-German relations must play in any development in the policy of European appeasement, which was considered to be the essential object of any Franco-German action. The Minister was at pains to throw all the blame for the present state of affairs on the British Government. He said that the British Government and especially the British Press, which in the days following the Munich Agreement had appeared to show a certain degree of understanding, had now adopted an attitude that was most disappointing for Berlin; the emphasis placed in London on the urgency of rearmament, the repeated demonstrations in Parliament, under the influence of Mr. Duff Cooper, Mr. Winston Churchill, Mr. Eden and Mr. Morrison, and the articles in the newspapers, had been strongly resented in Germany, where he said it had been impossible to restrain the reactions of the Press. I again stressed the fundamental and solid character of Franco-British solidarity, and gave him very clearly to understand that a genuine easing of Franco-German relations could not be conceived as enduring without a corresponding improvement between Great Britain and Germany.

With regard to Czechoslovakia, an exchange of observations was necessary in order to leave no doubt as to the implications of the international agreement of Munich, if executed both in the letter and the spirit. The Minister for Foreign Affairs is to re-examine, as



“Germany was preparing to ‘forget’ the guarantee of Czechoslovakia’s frontiers”
(German troops enter Prague Castle)

[Sport & General

soon as he returns to Berlin, the question of the setting up of the international guarantee, the principle of which was asserted by Germany in protocol No. 1.

Such are the principal political questions mentioned, in very general terms, in the course of the Franco-German conversations of December 6, which never assumed the formal character of a conference. Although they were not embodied in detailed heads of agreement or in any official record, they shed light on certain important points. These explanatory talks were essential at the moment when the Franco-German declaration was signed, which not only aims at promoting peaceful co-operation between the two countries, but should also be conducive to a general appeasement in the relations of the principal European Powers.

GEORGES BONNET.

Ribbentrop's plighted word proved to be as unreliable as usual, for when M. Coulondre called on the German Foreign Office a fortnight later and brought the question of the Czechoslovak guarantee up, he found that the German authorities regarded the whole thing rather as a joke.

"As I recalled that Herr von Ribbentrop had spoken in Paris of his intention of re-examining the question," wrote M. Coulondre, "and I asked if there were any further news, I was given a negative answer. Herr von Weizsäcker smiled and remarked: 'Couldn't that whole business be forgotten?' . . . Naturally, I observed that one could not forget one's signed agreements. . . . But I gathered that my interlocutor had his religion ready-made on the subject."

Germany, in fact, was preparing not merely to "forget" the guarantee of those frontiers, but to violate them.

France, again, took the trouble to correct any false impression which might exist in Germany. Ribbentrop,

in a talk with M. Coulondre, spoke of a "possible impression that France had not given up the policy (with regard to her agreements with countries in Eastern Europe) which led to the last crisis." M. Coulondre hastened to reply that "France had no intention of abandoning her friendships or her interests in any region of the continent."

The hint was wasted. Germany continued to regard South-eastern Europe, in the words of M. Coulondre, as her "private game preserve." At last, on February 4, 1939, Great Britain and France made a joint and formal request for information about Germany's intentions with regard to the "guarantee" of Czechoslovakia's frontiers.

A reply, after 22 days, was forthcoming. "It declares," wrote M. Coulondre, "without mincing matters, that any intervention in Eastern Europe by the Western Powers in the form of a guarantee in favour of the Czechoslovak State would be more harmful than useful."

"Translated into clear language," M. Coulondre added, ". . . the Western Powers have no further rights (according to the German reply) in Central Europe."

By rejecting the international guarantee for Czechoslovakia's frontiers, Germany had revealed her aggressive intentions. The aggression was not slow to follow, and it proceeded according to Nazi ritual.

M. HACHA'S AGONY

THE last agony of Czechoslovakia contained the usual ingredients—allegations of "internal difficulties," Press campaigns, provocations, troop concentrations, and finally an ultimatum carrying a threat of bombing Prague.

As usual, Germany attempted to give "an appearance of legitimacy to the violence against Czechoslovakia." On this occasion the Slovak Nationalists were cast for the part which the Sudeten had played six months

earlier. Their leader Mgr. Tiso was induced to appeal to Berlin for help. But M. Coulondre was able to record that "there was no doubt that Slovak separatism was primarily the work of German agents or of Slovaks inspired directly by Berlin" and to give facts and names.

On March 13 he had reported: "The fate of Bohemia and of Moravia is settled henceforward. It is annexation pure and simple." M. de Montbas, Chargé d'Affaires, introduced a new and appropriate phrase into diplomatic phraseology: "According to information which has reached the Embassy, German intervention may take place next week in the form of an 'armed mediation.' "

The armed mediation took place on March 15, but it was preceded by the agony of Dr. Hacha—who was the victim of Germany's determination to give "an appearance of legitimacy" to her violence.

M. Hacha, President of the Czechoslovak Republic, was summoned to Berlin on March 14 with his Foreign Minister, M. Chvalkovsky. In a vivid dispatch, M. Coulondre describes what took place on the night of March 14-15.

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, March 17, 1939.

ON the subject of the circumstances in which M. Hacha and M. Chvalkovsky were constrained to sign the treaty by which the fate of Bohemia and Moravia passed into the Führer's hands, I think I should report the following account, which I heard from a reliable source.

During the afternoon of the 14th, the German Legation in Prague made it known to the Czernin Palace that, in view of the deterioration in the situation, it might be useful if the President and the Minister for Foreign Affairs would go to Berlin.

Immediately on arrival, M. Hacha and his Minister, who were received with military honours, were taken to the Chancellery, where Herr Hitler, Field-Marshal



[Associated Press]

M. Hacha "was taken to the Chancellery"

Goering, Herr von Ribbentrop and Herr Keppler were waiting for them.

The document to be signed lay waiting on the table, in its final form, as well as a memorandum relating to the future Statute for the administration of Bohemia and Moravia.

The Führer stated very briefly that the time was not one for negotiation, but that the Czech Ministers had been summoned to be informed of Germany's decisions, that these decisions were irrevocable, that Prague would be occupied on the following day at 9 o'clock, Bohemia and Moravia incorporated within the Reich and constituted a Protectorate, and whoever tried to resist would be "trodden underfoot" (*zertreten*). With that, the Führer wrote his signature and went out. It was about 12.30 a.m.

A tragic scene then took place between the Czech Ministers and the three Germans.

For hours on end Dr. Hacha and M. Chvalkovsky protested against the outrage done to them, declared that they could not sign the document presented to them, pointed out that were they to do so they would be for ever cursed by their people. Dr. Hacha, with all the energy at his command, fought against the Statute of Protectorate which it was intended to impose on the Czechs, observing that no white people was reduced to such a condition.

The German Ministers were pitiless. They literally hunted Dr. Hacha and M. Chvalkovsky round the table on which the documents were lying, thrusting them continually before them, pushing pens into their hands, incessantly repeating that if they continued in their refusal, half Prague would lie in ruins from aerial bombardment within two hours, and that this would be only the beginning. Hundreds of bombers were only awaiting the order to take off, and they would receive that order at six in the morning if the signatures were not forthcoming by then.

President Hacha was in such a state of exhaustion



[Wide World Photos

Herr von Neurath congratulates Hitler. What does M. Hacha think?

that he more than once needed medical attention from the doctors, who, by the way, had been there ready for service since the beginning of the interview. The Czech Ministers having stated they could not take such a decision without the consent of their Government, they received the answer that a direct telephonic line existed to the Cabinet of Ministers then in session at Prague, and that they could get in touch immediately. It is a fact that such a line had been laid down in Czech territory by members of the German minority without the knowledge of the authorities.

At 4.30 in the morning, Dr. Hacha, in a state of total collapse, and kept going only by means of injections, resigned himself with death in his soul to give his signature. As he left the Chancellery, M. Chvalkovsky declared: "Our people will curse us, and yet we have saved their existence. We have preserved them from a horrible massacre."

COULONDRE.

THE SUMMING UP

M. COULONDRE had already summed the whole thing up—Czechoslovakia, he wrote, had suffered from "an operation which bore to an even greater degree than former coups the characteristic marks of Nazi action: cynicism and treachery in conception, secrecy in preparation and brutality in execution."

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, March 16, 1939.

LESS than six months after the conclusion of the Munich Agreement and hardly four months after the Vienna Award, Germany, treating her own and her partners' signature as negligible quantities, has brought about the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, occupied with her army Bohemia and Moravia and annexed both these provinces to the Reich. Since yesterday, March 15, the swastika has been flying over the

Hradschin, while the Führer, protected by tanks and armoured cars, entered the city among a staggered and thunderstruck population. Slovakia has broken away. A so-called independent State, she has in fact placed herself under the protection of Germany. Sub-Carpathian Russia has been left to Hungary, whose troops have already crossed the frontier. Czechoslovakia, which at Munich agreed to such cruel sacrifices for the sake of peace, no longer exists. The dream of those Nazis who were most eager for her destruction has been realized. Czechoslovakia has vanished from the map of Europe.

The events which have led up to this result with a lightning speed are typical of the mentality and the methods of the Nazi rulers. They carry with them certain lessons and practical conclusions which all States anxious for their independence and security should draw without delay, faced as they are with a Germany intoxicated by success and which, abandoning the line of racial claims, is plunging forward into sheer imperialism.

The operation to which Czechoslovakia has just fallen a victim bears to an even greater degree than former coups the characteristic marks of Nazi action: cynicism and treachery in conception, secrecy in preparation and brutality in execution.

At Munich, the Nazi leaders and the Führer himself had laid great stress on the impossibility for Germans and Czechs to live together in the same State; they had urged the implacable and age-long hatred of the Czechs for everything German; they had asserted that the maintenance of peace depended on a line being drawn strictly between the two nationalities; they had managed to convince Lord Runciman of this necessity whilst protesting on the other hand that they had no wish to incorporate alien elements in the Reich. It was in virtue of these principles that the negotiators assembled in the Bavarian capital had compelled the Prague Government to hand over territories in which

the German population was predominant. In exchange, Czechoslovakia was to receive an international guarantee of her new frontiers, a guarantee in which Germany herself would take part.

Actually, it very soon appeared, during the work of the International Commission at Berlin at the beginning of October, that the German negotiators were guided far more by strategical than by ethnographical considerations. The numerous interventions of the Wehrmachts Oberkommando during the course of these negotiations showed that the German leaders intended above all to draw a frontier which would deprive Czechoslovakia of all her natural defences and fortifications, and would reduce her to complete military impotence. Indeed, the boundaries which the Prague Government had to accept in October meant the inclusion of 850,000 Czechs within the Reich.

To-day there is no further question of the separation of Czechs from Germans, which was claimed to be so indispensable to peace in the Danube basin and in Europe. Completely reversing her tactics, Germany has again brought into being that German-Czech amalgamation, the elements of which she had declared last September to be incompatible. Whereas a few months ago she was saying that the co-existence of these two racial groups was an impossibility, she now claims to show that such a co-existence is entirely natural, that it can be historically justified and that it is the result of certain economic and geographical necessities. There is no further question of the implacable and age-long hatred between Germans and Czechs: on the contrary, it is held that the two peoples can and must live in harmony together inside one political community.

The Munich Agreements, therefore, were for the Nazi rulers nothing but a means of disarming Czechoslovakia before annexing it. It would, perhaps, be going rather far to assert that the Führer had conceived this project even at Munich. What is beyond all doubt is that, by annexing under threat of arms the provinces of Bohemia



[Associated Press

M. Hacha leaves Berlin

and Moravia, the Government of the Reich, a signatory to the September agreements, is guilty of a breach of trust, of a real act of treachery to the co-signatory states, particularly the Czech Government which, trusting in the word of the Great Powers, had resigned itself to handing over the Sudeten territories.

It was in the name of this ethnographical principle that the Reich had obtained the return of three and a half million Germans in September. It is in contempt of this principle that it annexes eight million Czechs to-day, left defenceless by the handing over of the Sudeten territory.

It is the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination that Germany now invokes in support of the independence (in any case purely illusory) of Slovakia, but this same right is refused to the Carpatho-Ukrainians abandoned to Hungary, and to the Czechs who have been forcibly incorporated in the Reich.

Germany has once again demonstrated her contempt for all written pledges and her preference for methods of brute force and the *fait accompli*. Without scruple she has torn up the Munich Agreement as well as the Vienna Award, proving yet again that her policy has only one guiding principle: to watch for a suitable opportunity and to seize any booty within reach. It is, more or less, the morality common to the gangster and to the denizens of the jungle.

German cynicism has, moreover, been accompanied by consummate skill. With a remarkable control of men and events, the Government of the Reich has been at pains to give an appearance of legality to the violence done to the Czechs.

The official German thesis is that Czechoslovakia fell to pieces of itself. Slovakia, it is declared, in breaking with Prague, split the Federal Republic into three pieces.

As for Bohemia and Moravia, it was freely and of its own volition that the Prague Government, unable to maintain order and to protect the lives of the German

minority, placed the care of these provinces—so runs the argument—in the Führer's hands.

Such arguments can deceive no one.

There can be no doubt that Slovak separatism was the work of German agents or of Slovaks controlled directly from Berlin. M. Mach, head of the propaganda department of the Bratislava Government and a most ardent extremist, was well-known for his entire devotion to the Reich. M. Durcansky, Minister of Transport, who made frequent visits to Germany, was also a mere tool in Nazi hands, particularly in those of M. Karmasin, the "Führer" of the 120,000 Germans in Slovakia. As for Mgr. Tiso, a man of little energy, although as a priest he was worried by the growth of Nazi ideology in his country, he was incapable of opposing the separatist tendencies encouraged by Germany. It was on account of this weakness that the Prague Government dismissed him on March 10. This rigorous measure against Mgr. Tiso and the latter's appeal for assistance to the Reich Government supplied the German rulers with the excuse for which they had been waiting to interfere in the quarrel between the Czechs and the Slovaks. . . .

. . . In conclusion I will simply draw attention to what may be learnt from this new coup committed by the Third Reich.

Nazi Germany has now thrown aside the mask. Until now, she has denied the charge of imperialism. She asserted that her only wish was to re-unite as far as possible all the Germans of Central Europe in one family, to the exclusion of aliens. To-day, it is clear that the Führer's thirst for domination knows no limit.

It is equally clear that all hopes of opposing to the Führer any arguments other than those of force are in vain. The Third Reich has the same contempt as the Empire of Wilhelm II for treaties and pledges. Germany remains the country of "scraps of paper."

National security as well as world peace demand from the French people an immense effort of discipline and the organization of the country's whole energy, which

alone will enable France, with the help of her friends, to assert herself and defend her interests in the face of so formidable an adversary as the Germany of Adolf Hitler, plunging forward to the conquest of Europe.
COULONDRE.

Was this the end? Now that Germany's "last claim" had been more than satisfied, would there be peace?

Even before the end of Czechoslovakia, a new "claim" had been heard of, a new country threatened . . . Poland.

4. THE DANZIG PRETEXT

As early as February 4, 1939, M. Noël telegraphed from Warsaw that a German demand for "a corridor through the Corridor" in the form of an extra-territorial motor-road had been rejected by Poland.

After the blow at Prague, however, there was a momentary hesitation. Would the threat to Poland, which so far had amounted only to a hint, be followed up, or would the pressure of Germany's will to expand make itself felt elsewhere?

Again, M. Coulondre—whose Cassandra-like warnings constitute a monument to his patriotism and prescience—summed the situation up, in a despatch so remarkable that it should be read in full.

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, March 19, 1939.

ON the morrow of the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia by the Reich, and the passing of Slovakia into German tutelage, I should like, after the violent changes wrought in the map of Europe, to try and determine in which directions German dynamism may turn, to see if we may still hold that it is aimed only at the East, and to draw certain practical conclusions for our guidance.

A direct challenge to world opinion by the treachery, the cynicism, and the brutality it shows, the "coup" by which Germany has just wiped Czechoslovakia off the map cannot simply be dismissed as a break in the general political line taken by Germany since last autumn, nor even as a deviation from this line. On the very morrow of the Munich Agreement, it was clear that beyond the Rhine this Agreement was taken to imply a free hand for Germany in Central and Eastern

Europe, and, as a corollary, relative renunciation of their interests in these regions by the Western Powers. Germany had understood, or pretended to have understood, that at Munich France and England had wished above all to prevent recourse to force, but that for the rest they were resigned to Germany's will prevailing in countries in which neither Paris nor London could effectively intervene.

The Munich Agreement, completed by the Anglo-German and Franco-German declarations, meant in Germany's eyes the right for the Reich to organize Central and South-Eastern Europe as she wished, with the tacit approval or at least the complaisance of the great Western Powers. For months this version found daily expression in the leading German newspapers, officially inspired, as the reports from the Embassy have often shown. I myself have more than once noted the same state of mind in Herr von Ribbentrop and Herr von Weizsäcker, both of whom have expressed a certain astonishment whenever I have drawn their attention to the fact that France, as a great European Power, intends to be consulted in all that pertains to Europe, and that on this point there must be no mistake or misunderstanding. And yet, this misunderstanding did in fact exist. The Nazi leaders did not fail to stress on every occasion that, as the Führer said in his speech of January 30, "Central Europe was a region where the Western Powers had no concern."

In this respect, the German seizure of Bohemia and Moravia, with the subsequent inclusion of Slovakia within the German orbit, is in line with the policy of eastern expansion of which Germany has not only made no secret since last autumn but which she has openly proclaimed.

During the last six months the tendencies of German foreign policy may be summed up as follows: a purely defensive attitude in the west and the orientation towards the east of Nazi aims and ambitions. The German attempt to occupy the whole of Slovakia and



[Wide World Photos

M. Coulondre . . . "his Cassandra-like warnings were a tribute to his perspicacity and his patriotism"

even Sub-Carpathian Russia shows even more clearly than the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia in which direction lie German thoughts, and the German thrust.

Though we have no reason whatever to be surprised at this new advance of German influence in the East, on the other hand we have every right to condemn the unspeakable methods used by the Reich to achieve it. It is these methods which, properly speaking, constitute the break in the policy of appeasement begun at Munich, and which found expression in the declarations of September 30 and December 6. France and Britain were entitled to expect that in the event of fresh Central European difficulties they would be consulted by the Reich; the German Government, moreover, could not be unaware that the French and British Cabinets were ready for such an exchange of views. France and Great Britain also had the right to assume that Germany would not reject the racial principle which at Munich had guided the settlement of the German-Czech crisis, nor that, having invoked the rights of nationalities, Germany would violate them so wantonly. Paris and London could hope that having renounced the use of force at Munich, Germany would not again have recourse to threats of the wholesale massacre of civil populations by her air force in particularly odious circumstances. France and Britain were also entitled to expect that the rulers of the Reich would not treat as purely negligible the agreements reached at Munich and the declarations which followed them, and that they would not simply throw into the waste-paper basket documents on which the signature of the head of the German State was hardly dry.

But this is in fact what has happened. The Munich Agreements no longer exist. The psychological grounds on which the potentialities of the declarations of September 30 and December 6 might have borne fruit have been destroyed. Various German papers are already interpreting as a denunciation of the Anglo-German and Franco-German declarations the *démarche* by which

Britain and France made it known on March 18 that they could not recognize as legal the position in Central Europe which had been brought about by the Reich.

We find ourselves faced, therefore, with an entirely new situation. Germany has not been content to consolidate and extend her political influence over the nations living in the Reich's orbit. She has revealed her desire to absorb them, if not to annihilate them. From a policy of expansion she has gone on to a policy of conquest, the claims of common race giving way henceforth to military imperialism.

This brutal confession of a lust of conquest, which the Third Reich had hitherto been at pains to conceal, could not fail to arouse deep feeling throughout the world. Faced with the wave of hostile criticism which it has provoked, and after having absorbed in one year 18 million new subjects, of whom eight millions are aliens, will Germany find it necessary to mark time for a while? Or, taking advantage of its acquired momentum and of the stupor of the Central European States, will it continue its drive towards the East? Or, again, will it be tempted to face about and put an end to the opposition of the Western Powers which is interfering with the Reich's liberty of action in the East? In other words, will the Führer be tempted to return to the idea expressed by the author of *Mein Kampf*, which, be it said, is identical with the classic doctrine held by the German General Staff, according to which Germany cannot accomplish her high destiny in the East until France has been crushed and, as a consequence, Britain reduced to impotence on the Continent?

We must likewise examine whether there is still time to erect in the East a wall capable of stemming to a certain extent the German drive, and if to this end we should not take advantage of the favourable circumstances offered to us by the tension and anxiety which prevail in the Central European capitals, especially in Warsaw.

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The renewed changes which the European map has undergone to Germany's advantage will mean from now on a great increase in her potential, if not her actual, war strength.

Germany, whose currency resources were completely exhausted, has just seized the greater part of the gold and currency reserves in the Czech National Bank. The sum so taken, about 50,000,000 dollars, will be of no small advantage to a nation almost completely without the means to make international payments.

Still more important is the passing into German hands of a large quantity of first-class war material, together with the Skoda works. These world-famous works supplied not only Czechoslovakia but Rumania and Jugoslavia, whose military positions are thus seriously impaired. I will mention only by way of reminder that the Skoda works are at present manufacturing aeroplane engines for us. Possessing both the Krupp and the Skoda works, the Reich is henceforth beyond all doubt the most advantageously placed supplier of war material for Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Germany has, therefore, a means of bringing pressure to bear on policy and of controlling armaments, which must not be underestimated, as well as a possibility of obtaining substantial amounts of foreign currency by sales abroad.

Further, the seizure of Bohemia and Moravia is the first territorial operation which, from the point of view of food supplies, has not caused a loss to the Reich. On the contrary, it greatly improves the German food situation, not only on account of the relative fertility of Bohemia and Moravia, but also and still more because the Reich now finds itself at the very door of the Hungarian and Rumanian granaries.

Again, the economic leaders of the Reich now have a considerable reserve of labour at their disposal. Autarchy, excessive rearmament, great public works require a labour strength above that which the Reich itself could provide. There was a shortage of a million



[International Graphic Press

Hitler . . . "reasonable, raging, but never consistent"

and a half labourers in industry and agriculture. In these circumstances, it was hard to see how Germany could, in the event of general mobilization, meet the increased labour demands and fill the gaps left by the men called to the colours. The Czechs, considered unworthy to bear arms, will provide the 5,000,000 workers which Germany needed for such an emergency.

Finally, and above all, the strategical position of Germany has vastly improved. In place of the winding frontier, several hundred miles long, which separated Germany from Czechoslovakia, is substituted the much shorter and more easily defended line joining Austria to Silesia. Germany thus saves the several divisions which would have had to watch the Czech frontier in the event of war. Further, the Bohemian and Moravian tableland provides an excellent base of operations, particularly for aircraft, whose effective range will henceforth cover the greater part of the Balkans, to say nothing of Hungary and Poland.

The first act of the German military authorities after the occupation of the Czech provinces was to make Vienna the centre of a new air fleet, the Fourth¹ (South-East), made up of units stationed in Austria, Sudetenland, Bohemia and Moravia. "The creation of this fourth fleet," the German papers have pointed out, "increases the power of our air force beyond all our expectations."

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Besides the increase of material forces, we must also take into account the immense pride which, as a result of the prodigious successes secured in one year,² could not fail to swell the Nazi leaders' bosoms and inflame their minds. Without striking a blow, without meeting

¹The German Air Force had hitherto been divided into three air fleets.

²The conquest of Austria occurred on March 12, 1938, that of Bohemia and Moravia on March 15, 1939.

with any hindrance beyond a few gestures of protest, the Reich had swallowed 20 million men, turned the whole structure of Europe upside down and forged a military machine of such power that Europe was forced on more than one decisive occasion to bow to German demands; there indeed is an achievement to turn the most well-balanced head. But no operation had ever moved so smoothly as that which culminated in the Führer's entering the Castle of Hradschin. How can Herr Hitler do otherwise than believe that nothing can stand against his will? How could he fail to make capital out of the undoubted superiority that Germany has won for itself in the air? It is quite possible that to-morrow he will apply to Rumania or Poland the same means that had been so successful against Austria and Czechoslovakia and place before them the alternatives of the massacre of civil populations and the destruction of open towns, or the acceptance of the German terms however onerous and humiliating they may be. One must not, however, exclude the possibility that the Reich, before carrying out its vast programme to the East, will first turn against the Western Powers.

There are three reasons for not ruling out at once such possibility. From the reactions of London and Paris to the annihilation of Czechoslovakia and the incorporation of the Czechs in the Reich, Nazi Germany must see—as she pretended not to see since Munich—that the Western Powers have not completely given up the whole of Europe beyond the Rhine.

Then, confronted by the rearmament of France, England and America, which is being watched here with more irritation and anxiety than is admitted, the Nazi leaders may be asking themselves how long they will enjoy the mastery of the air, which they have exploited so cynically for the past year, and if they too will not soon have to reckon with enemy air forces capable of shattering reprisals which would neutralize the threat of German air action, at present hanging over Europe.

It is true that, up to the present, there is no indica-

tion that Germany has modified her line of policy and that she intends at least temporarily to turn her eyes and her ambitions away from the East with a view to a Western war.

On the other hand, one fact seems to indicate that when the Nazi leaders were planning the scheme against Bohemia and Moravia, they were already intending to go still farther eastward at a more or less early date. From information hitherto received, it certainly seems that the German Army tried to occupy the whole of Slovakia and even Sub-Carpathian Russia. It was on account of Poland's attitude, and the Hungarian decision to take no notice of German representations, that the German troops were withdrawn to the line of the Vaag. Now, an occupation of Slovakia and Carpathian Ukraine, which would have brought the German Army right up to the Russian frontier, could have had political or military significance only if further operations were contemplated against either Rumania or Poland. In well-informed circles in Berlin it is thought that these regions are the more immediately threatened.

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Yet it does not seem that the direction of the next Nazi thrust has been decided upon or that plans for further action have been formulated.

An official of the Propaganda Ministry seems to have summed up accurately the state of mind of the Nazi leaders in a remark made to one of my compatriots: "We have before us so many open doors, so many possibilities, that we no longer know which way to turn or what direction to take."

We shall not go far wrong if we assume that the line of conduct to be adopted by the Reich, which now forms a block of 90 million inhabitants in the heart of Europe, will be influenced by the balance of forces in Europe.



[Fox Photos

"To proceed without intermission to the subjugation of East-Europe." Warsaw after the Nazi bombers have passed

As things are, the Nazi leaders consider that the lead they have established in armaments and the strategical position they have won protect them from attack. Their weak point is a shortage of stocks and a lack of raw materials and foodstuffs which would make it impossible for them to stand a long war. Given the material impossibility of challenging Britain's mastery of the sea, the Nazi leaders see two ways open to them.

Either to proceed without intermission to the subjugation of East and South-East Europe and perhaps to that of Scandinavia, thus securing for Germany in one way or another the resources of these countries, and enabling it to a certain extent to face a blockade.

Or to attack France and Britain, before these two Powers have, with American help, caught up with German armaments, and in particular, snatched from Germany the mastery of the air.

This second possibility is not at present the more probable. But we must reckon with the risk of seeing Germany engaged in such an undertaking. This risk may even be increased by the intensification and the speeding up of our rearmament.

However, as we have no choice save either to bow one day to Hitler's will or, by uniting our forces with those of Britain, to build a military machine, and especially an air force, strong enough to impress Germany, it is vital that we should without delay:

(a) Rearm to the maximum of our capacity.

(b) As far as possible, avoid all publicity about this intensive rearmament.

In any case, whatever new form German dynamism may take after the conquest of Bohemia and Moravia, we are always driven to the same conclusion: to the unavoidable necessity for concentrating the nation's energies towards as vast and as swift a development of its military strength as possible, especially with regard to its Air Force.

In view of the impulsive character of the Nazi leaders, the state of mental intoxication in which the Führer

must be at present and the irritation and alarm caused in Germany by the rearmament of the democracies and by the attitude of America, I consider that we must proceed without delay to the industrial mobilization of the country, as secretly and as intensively as possible.

COULONDRE.

GERMAN MANŒUVRES

WHATEVER Germany's ultimate aims, it became clear that Poland was the next step. The Danzig "claim" was urged, repeated and finally merged in greater "claims." Nothing is more clear in these despatches than the way in which Danzig was the excuse, deliberately exploited until it was convenient to lay it aside and reveal Germany's ulterior aim—the destruction of Poland.

Danzig, eventually, was dismissed as a "detail" by Ribbentrop himself, and gave way to "claims" for a revision of Germany's entire eastern frontiers, for the Corridor and Upper Silesia, and for the transfer of the German minorities.

The Danzig claim was also used—unsuccessfully—as a manœuvre to divide the Allies; it was thought that large sections of the French and especially of the British people would not think it "worth while to fight for Danzig." How clear this manœuvre was is shown by the fact that a regular whispering campaign was started. M. Coulondre reported that "German diplomatic posts have been instructed to spread the report that France and Great Britain will not fight for Danzig. I have myself observed a revival of this whispering campaign among the diplomatic corps in Berlin."

Unfortunately for the German diplomats, the "Yellow Book" dispatches also show that this manœuvre failed entirely. On the French side, the French Foreign Minister and the French Ambassador in Berlin made it plain to the German authorities that the Allies stood together, and that they would carry out their obligations towards Poland.

So clear and so frequent were these assurances that at moments it seemed as if Hitler himself could have no further doubts.

"Herr Hitler makes no mistake about it," wrote M. Coulondre, "because he has in his own hands reports from his diplomats in which it is stated that Great Britain and France will, beyond a shadow of doubt, fight on Poland's side."

On the British side, too, there were warnings. Mr. Chamberlain gave a solemn assurance on March 31 that Great Britain would carry out her obligations; and M. Daladier spoke in the same way on April 13.

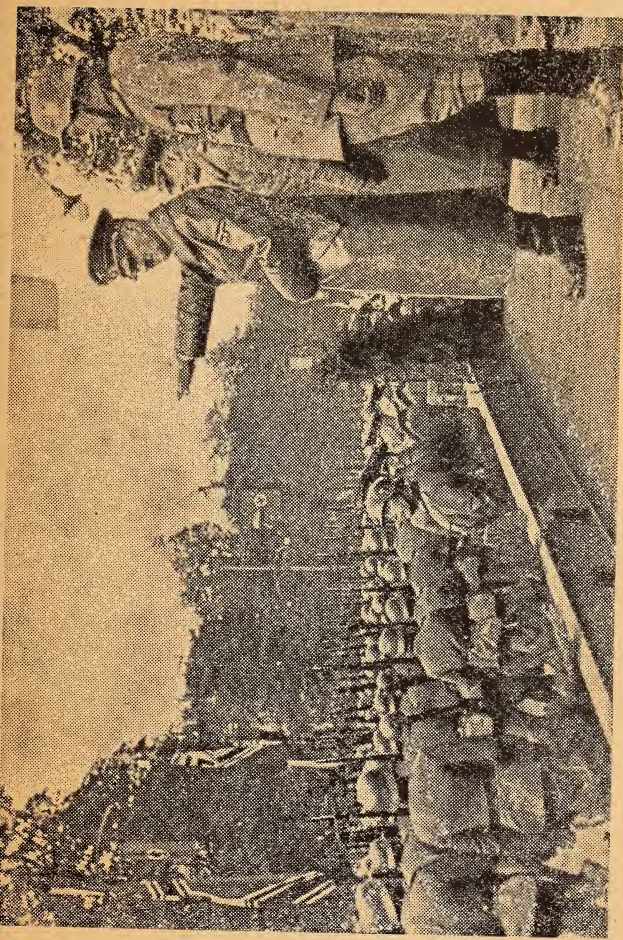
On June 30, M. Coulondre said to Herr Weizsäcker: "I hear that it is sometimes said among you that we will not fight for Danzig. I don't wish your Government to make any mistake on the subject. Danzig is a question between you and Poland, but—whether the point is Danzig or not—we shall be at Poland's side if a conflict arises." Lord Halifax gave the same warning on the same day, and M. Bonnet repeated it in a verbal message to Ribbentrop.

Apart from these warnings, the despatches also show that counsels of prudence were given, again and again, by Great Britain and France to Poland; thus disposing of the German lie that Poland was encouraged to be intransigent.

The points, therefore, which emerge from the despatches are: (1) the use of the Danzig "claim" and the manner in which it gave way to increased claims; (2) the attempt to divide the Allies and the failure of that attempt; (3) the assurances to Germany that the Allies would fight; (4) the counsels of prudence to Poland.

"HEGEMONY IN EUROPE"

IN March the French diplomats reported secret negotiations between Germany and Poland which showed that Germany was pursuing her claims for the return of Danzig and a road across the Corridor. Later in the



[Associated Press

Hitler greets German troops in Warsaw

month the formal demand was made and formally rejected. The result was that, in April, Hitler—in a speech to the Reichstag—denounced the German-Polish pact of 1934.

In May, however, there seemed to be a lull; but M. Coulondre was not deceived. In a further summary of the situation, he said that whatever means the Germans had to employ, they were determined to “establish hegemony” in Europe.

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, May 9, 1939.

THE German-Polish conflict appears to have come to a standstill for the moment.

On May 5, Colonel Beck replied in the Diet to the speech that Herr Hitler had made before the Reichstag on April 28. On the same day the Polish Chargé d’Affaires in Berlin handed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs his Government’s memorandum in reply to the German memorandum. Each of the conflicting parties maintains its attitude. The National-Socialist leaders announce through their Press that they expect a gesture from Warsaw.¹ On their side, the Poles put forward the history of the German-Polish negotiations and the unilateral repudiation by the Reich of the treaty of 1934 in order to maintain, and rightly so, that it is not for them to take the first step, or to take the initiative in proposing that conversations should take place. In placing the text of the Polish memorandum in Baron von Weizsäcker’s hands, Prince Lubomirski did not attempt to bring about a renewed exchange of views. The interview, so he told me, lasted only as long as was necessary for the actual handing over of the document.

¹See *Börsenzeitung*, May 6: “M. Beck mentioned, at the end of his speech, the possibility of fresh negotiations. He cannot expect us, after all that has happened, to go to him. If fresh negotiations should really take place, Germany expects Poland to make a gesture which is in conformity with the Führer’s straightforward attitude.”

It should be noted, on the other hand, that since Saturday afternoon, that is to say, since May 6, the German Press has restrained its tone towards Poland. The newspapers are noticeably more moderate in their attacks against M. Beck and his Government. This lull coincides with the Italian-German conversations in Milan. Is this mere chance? Or might it be, as it is rumoured in Berlin, that Italy only signed the military alliance with the Reich on condition that the latter would, for the present, not undertake anything against Poland?

Anyhow, the articles about Poland, which in the German newspapers tend to take the same place as articles about Czechoslovakia last summer, have not been aggravated by new incidents. Obviously, formal instructions towards moderation have been given on both sides. As to Poland, Prince Lubomirski has assured me that nothing has been neglected in order to allay the excitement of the people there. As a proof of this he instanced the fact that his Government, while it was lodging a protest in Berlin through diplomatic channels, had not wished to give any publicity to the numerous violations of the frontier committed by German planes: according to what he told me, in the last fortnight 64 German machines were reported to have flown over Polish territory in an illegal manner. The Germans, on the other hand, during the last three months had only been able to make nine similar charges against Polish aviation.

I did not fail to remind the Polish Chargé d'Affaires of the importance attached in Paris and London to the fact that Warsaw should maintain this attitude of wise moderation and should avoid furnishing the slightest excuse for the anti-Polish campaign to Dr. Goebbels.

On military questions, as I have mentioned elsewhere, I have received no information of special interest. True, movements of troops are being observed in different parts of German territory, but nowhere have there been

any disquieting concentrations in the vicinity of the Polish frontier.

It appears, then, that this must be taken as a short lull, the duration of which, admittedly, remains uncertain. Convinced as it is to-day of the determination of Poland and of her Western allies to offer armed resistance to any new attack on the part of Germany, the Reich appears to abandon for a time purely strategical considerations and to take up anew the diplomatic game. One may assume that the exact study of the moral and material forces confronting one another counted for something in this prudent decision.

*
* *

As to the diplomatic contest which is now being initiated, the conditions are comparatively easy for Germany. Her purpose is to subdue Polish resistance, either by direct or indirect pressure, and thus to destroy beyond repair the bulwark which the Western Powers are endeavouring to erect in the East against National-Socialist expansion. The first stage, that of direct pressure, ended in a reverse. Shall we now witness the development of the second stage, that of intimidation by indirect means? In order to reply to that question, it is not unprofitable to call to mind briefly the history of the German proposals to Poland.

In his speech of April 28, Herr Hitler summed up as follows the essential points of those proposals:

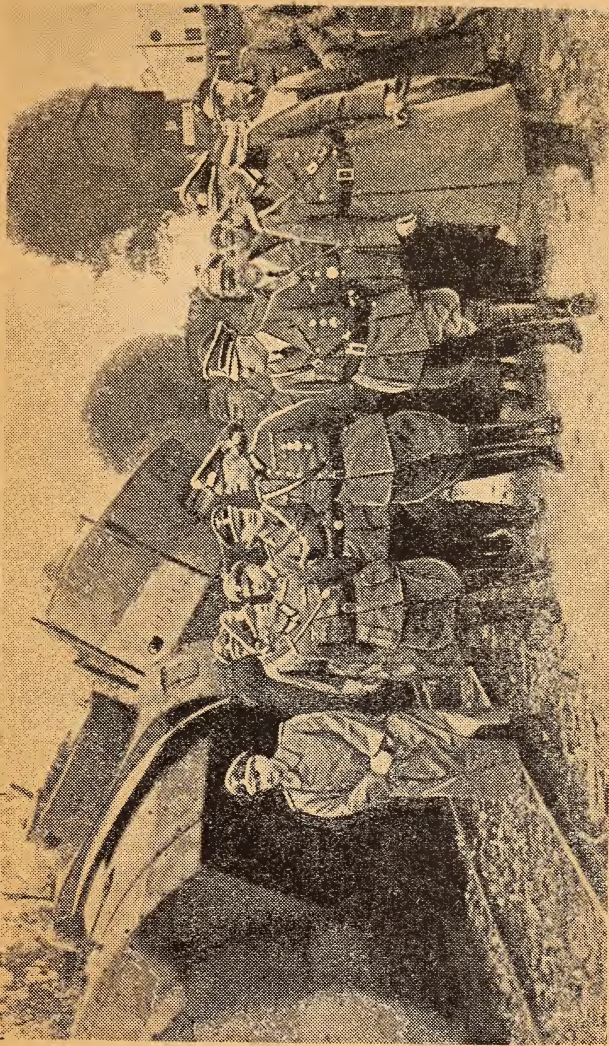
(1) Danzig returns as a Free State into the framework of the German Reich.

(2) Germany receives a road through the Corridor and a railway line at her disposal possessing the same extra-territorial status as the Corridor itself has for Poland.

In return, Germany is prepared:

(1) To recognize all Polish economic rights in Danzig.

(2) To ensure for Poland a free harbour in Danzig of



[Wide World Photos

Hitler with General Keitel inspects an armoured train which was wrecked by the Poles

any size desired with completely free access to the sea.

(3) To accept at the same time the present boundaries between Germany and Poland and to regard them as final.

(4) To conclude a twenty-five-year non-aggression treaty with Poland.

(5) To guarantee the independence of the Slovak State by Germany, Poland and Hungary jointly—which means in practice the renunciation of any unilateral German hegemony in this territory.

According to Herr Hitler, the Polish Government declined this offer and declared itself merely disposed:

(1) To negotiate concerning the question of a substitute for the High Commissioner of the League of Nations.

(2) To consider facilities for the transit traffic through the Corridor.

Now M. Beck, before the Polish Diet on May 5, gave the correct version:

(1) On the first and second points, i.e., the question of the future of Danzig and communications across Polish Pomerania, he said it was still a matter of unilateral concessions which the Government of the Reich appeared to be demanding from Poland.

The proof of this, according to him, was that the Polish counter-proposals of March 26, aiming at a "joint guarantee of the existence and the rights of the Free City," remained unanswered, and that the Government of Warsaw had learnt only through the speech of April 28 that these counter-proposals had been taken as a refusal in Berlin.

(2) As regards the triple condominium in Slovakia, the Minister stated that he had heard this proposal for the first time in the Chancellor's speech of April 28. In certain previous conversations allusions were merely made to the effect that in the event of a general agreement the question of Slovakia could be discussed.

According to M. Beck, the Polish Government did not attempt to pursue such conversations any further.

(3) Similarly, the proposal for a prolongation of the pact of non-aggression for twenty-five years was also not advanced in any concrete form in any of the recent conversations. Here also unofficial hints were made, emanating, it is true, from prominent representatives of the Reich Government.

Through the pen of an officially inspired editor, Dr. Kriegk, in the *Nachtausgabe* (May 6), political circles in Berlin have in their turn denied M. Beck's assertions. The German version gives the following account:

(1) M. Beck had an opportunity in October 1938, and in January and March 1939, to learn all the details of the German proposals, either through his personal interviews with Chancellor Hitler and with Herr von Ribbentrop, or through the conversations of his Ambassador in Berlin with leading members of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

(2) Concerning especially the conclusion of a pact of non-aggression for twenty-five years, the Führer had expressly spoken of it to M. Beck in the course of their interview at the Obersalzberg on January 5, 1939.

(3) As to the Polish counter-proposals of March 26, it had been definitely indicated to the Polish Ambassador, when he presented them in Berlin, that the German Government saw them in the light of a refusal of the German proposals. Either M. Lipski did not inform his chief, or the latter is not speaking the truth.

Yet in this controversy, keenly contested as it is, there is one point which on the German side was modestly left in the dark. It is the one to which the Polish Foreign Minister referred when he specified that, in the German-Polish conversations, the representatives of the Reich Government had also given "other hints extending much further than the subject under discussion," and that their Government reserved the right to return to this matter if necessary.

Germany's silence is understandable, if it is realized that this is actually where the crux of the whole problem lies.

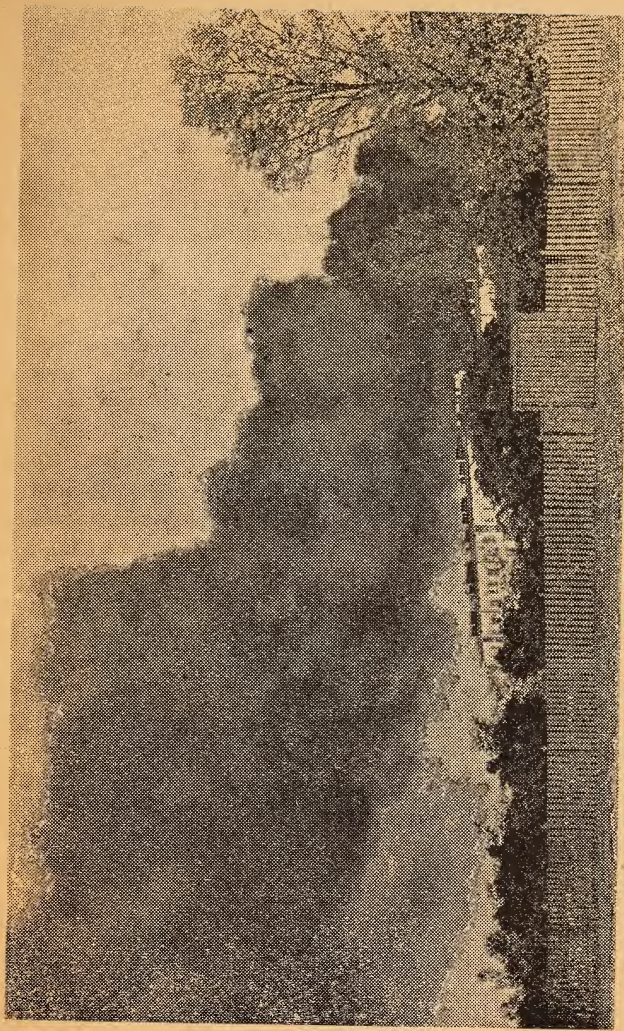
I have gathered, from a very reliable source, information which allows me to assert that, by way of compensation and in order to draw Poland into their game, the National-Socialist leaders have hinted in their conversations with the Poles at the possibility of sharing in a partition of the Russian Ukraine.

In the same connection the Polish Military Attaché, when he received one of my collaborators yesterday, gave some significant indications on the great plans which even recently the leaders of the Third Reich had been hammering out, and in the realization of which they had hoped, until March 26, to enlist Polish complicity.

It is said that when Chancellor Hitler received M. Beck at Berchtesgaden, he had spread out before him a map of Europe corrected in his own hand. On this map Danzig and the Corridor were again attached to the Reich; as to Poland, she was to annex Lithuania and receive the port of Memel. (The interview of Berchtesgaden took place on January 5.) M. Beck is reported to have been astounded at this sight.

When restored to its proper place in Adolf Hitler's general plans, the problem of Danzig thus represents merely a detail, but a detail which to-day assumes the importance of a strategical point. It is actually on this point that German policy has been testing, and will continue to test, the resistance of its adversaries. With good reason, the question of Danzig has been compared to the question of the Sudetenland. Doubtless, a certain degree of compromise is possible between Germany and Poland on the subject of the Free City, but the fact remains that if Danzig should one day become a German base, Poland will as surely be under the sway of the Reich as Czechoslovakia has been since the occupation of the Sudetenland.

One must never lose sight of the fact that the true aim of German ambitions is, and remains, the colonization of the centre and of the East of Europe; in a word, the domination of the Continent. If Poland had



[Planet News

“If Germany becomes mistress of Danzig, she would have Poland at her mercy.”

accepted Hitler's proposals she would have really placed herself in the position of a vassal of the Reich, she would have given her allegiance to the policy of the Axis, whose vanguard she would have been in aggression against Russia.

I believe that I can say, without fear of error, that what interested Herr Hitler above all in the offers he made to Poland was less the return of Danzig than the point which he never mentioned, viz., the alliance against Moscow and the bonds of complicity and absolute dependence which it entailed for Warsaw in respect of Berlin. The great merit of the Polish Government is to have realized that, through this insidious policy, the very independence of its country has been at stake from the very beginning.

Now that the method of direct pressure has failed, will the National-Socialist leaders have recourse to indirect pressure? After attempting to play Poland against Russia, will they reverse their method in order to try and intimidate the Poles and play Moscow against Warsaw? Certain declarations, and the interpretation given by political circles in Berlin to the fact that M. Litvinov has fallen into disfavour, might lead to this conclusion. But it is possible that they may be taking their wishes for facts in the matter.

We must not "fail to see the wood for the trees." The question is not whether we should fight, or not, for the sake of Danzig. It is up to Poland, when the time comes, to decide this question. The only concern of France and Great Britain is to be determined to prevent another *coup* by Hitler, and to check Nazi expansion while there is still time.

COULONDRE.

POLAND IN DANGER

A FEW days later the French Ambassador in Warsaw, too, pointed out that Germany, if she became mistress of the Free City of Danzig, would have Poland at her mercy.

M. LÉON NOËL, French Ambassador in Warsaw,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Warsaw, May 15, 1939.

At a time when Germany, by clever propaganda, is trying to persuade the world that the present risk of war is due solely to Poland's uncompromising attitude over the Danzig question, and to her stubborn refusal to permit the incorporation in the Reich of a city whose character is indisputably German, it will, perhaps, be useful to point out once more the causes which determine the Polish attitude.

In refusing to allow the annexation of Danzig by the Reich, with its inevitable consequences—among the foremost of which would be the occupation of the Free City not only by the S.A., the S.S., and a large militarized police force, but also by troops with all the most up-to-date equipment in use in the German Army—Poland is not guided merely by the very legitimate fear, prompted by memories of the Czechoslovak experience, of being caught in the fatal mesh of continuous concessions and renunciations. Whatever promises and "guarantees" Herr Hitler might offer by way of compensation for the annexation of Danzig, it would remain none the less true that Germany, once master of the Free City, would not be far from having Poland completely at her mercy. It would be a simple matter for Germany to restrict the advantages of access to the sea, which Germany would in principle have recognized to Poland, and much easier still to deprive her of the right of access altogether at the first convenient opportunity.

Sea-borne trade figures largely in Poland's foreign trade. Two-thirds of it in value, and more than three-quarters in bulk, pass through the two ports of Gdynia and Danzig. In 1938, in fact, of a total trade of 19,200,000 tons, 16,300,000 tons passed through them.

The tonnage handled by Gdynia and Danzig, which, as we shall see, is far from adequate for Poland's total needs, is divided between these two ports as follows:

9,200,000 tons at Gdynia and 7,100,000 at Danzig. The analysis of imports and exports is as follows:

	Imports	Exports
Gdynia ...	1,526,000 tons.	7,646,000 tons.
Danzig ...	1,562,000 tons.	5,563,000 tons.

One-third of the bulk, and 17 per cent of the value, of Polish foreign trade therefore passes through Danzig, while 46 per cent of the bulk and 48 per cent of the value passes through Gdynia.

As the Polish Government has been at pains, for practical reasons and in order to avoid wasteful competition, to make the two ports in its Customs area specialize in particular trades, Danzig has become the principal port for the export of Polish cereals (in 1938, 407,000 tons of agricultural produce against only 112,000 via Gdynia) and Polish timber (813,000 tons against 402,000). The coal trade is shared between them. Coal from the Dombrowa basin is exported via Danzig, that of Upper Silesia via Gdynia; the latter thus takes first place with 5,380,000 tons plus 1,000,000 tons of bunker coal against 3,500,000 tons via Danzig.

If Poland wanted to dispense with Danzig and give Gdynia the handling of all her commerce, she could do so only after some time had elapsed, and at great expense. Gdynia could probably cope successfully with the coal exports, but this port is not adequately equipped for handling either cereals or wood. Not only would new accommodation (granaries, etc.) have to be provided, but even new quays and larger warehouses would have to be built. The construction at the back of the port of a canal 2 kilometres long, a project already contemplated, would also be necessary.

From the point of view of communications, the importance to Poland of the Free City of Danzig is not confined to the use at present made of the harbour, or the fact that the mouth of the Vistula—the one important Polish river—is at Danzig. Though the Silesian-Baltic Railway, built and operated by the Franco-Polish Railway

Company, runs outside the territory of the Free City, the Warsaw-Gdynia line, on the other hand, crosses it and runs through Danzig itself.

From the naval and military point of view, it is no exaggeration to say that the territory of Danzig commands Poland's access to the sea.

The distance from Danzig to Hel is about 30 kilometres as the crow flies; from the nearest point on the coast in Danzig territory to Hel is about 25 kilometres. Ships passing near the Hel peninsula could, therefore, enter and leave the Bay of Gdynia remaining all the time out of range of the batteries on the Danzig coast.

On the other hand, Gdynia is less than 10 kilometres from the nearest point of Danzig territory and would be within range of guns placed between Zoppot and the western limit of Danzig territory.

Generally speaking, if Germany were able to construct fortifications in the south-west territory of the Free City, which forms a salient into the corridor, the defence of the latter would become still more difficult than it is now.

For the militarization of the Free City to have its full value, the Germans would, it is true, have to establish permanent means of communication between the two banks of the Vistula so as to link up the eastern portion with East Prussia. At present, no bridge spans the Vistula between Tczew (the last Polish town on the Vistula) and the sea, but Germany's vast technical resources would allow her to fill this gap quickly enough, and in any case make up for any deficiencies by emergency measures.

The above indications show how well founded is the uneasiness with which Poland regards the intentions of Herr Hitler.

Poland could not possibly exist without free access to the sea. Napoleon himself recognized this, adding that Danzig was essential to Poland "to enable her to dispose of her produce." The "Corridor" and Gdynia are not enough to ensure to Poland this "exit to the sea,"

which, in the words of Proudhon, "is vital to every large state." It should not be forgotten, moreover, that the events of last March have made this a still more vital necessity for Poland; she could, after her reconciliation with Lithuania, have utilized the "Port of Memel," but this is now out of the question; while, on the other hand, since the annexation by the Reich of Bohemia and Moravia, only at the cost of surrendering her independence to the Reich could she make sufficient use of the Czechoslovak railways to facilitate appreciably her foreign trade.

Herr Hitler does not seem to have understood these points; by choosing to claim Danzig precisely on the morrow of a series of aggressions, one result of which has been to make the maintenance of the existing status of Danzig more than ever indispensable to Poland, he has shown a complete lack of psychological insight.

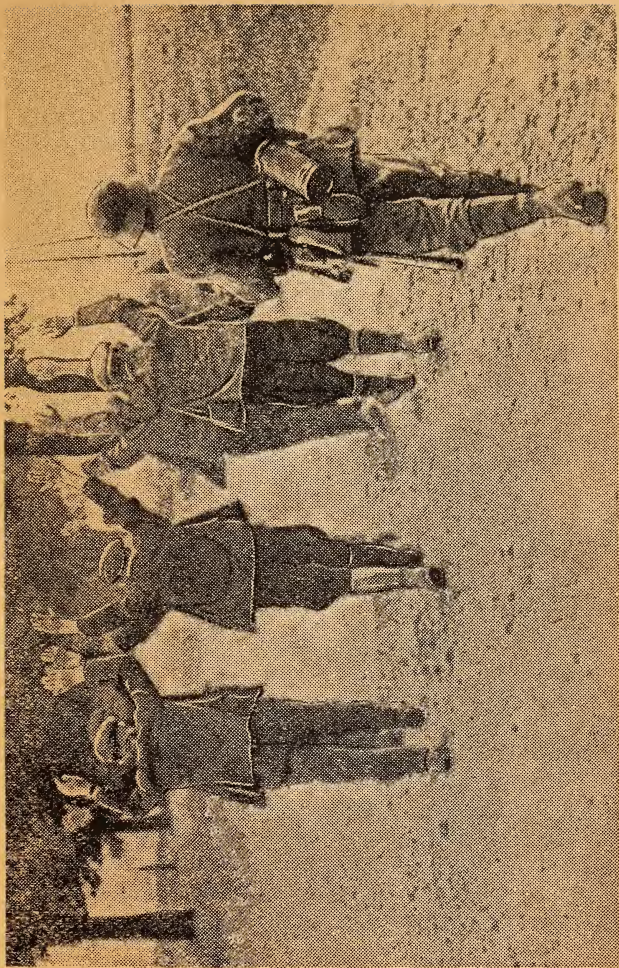
Before the partitions, the Poles called Danzig "the Admiral of Poland," thus symbolizing the importance they traditionally attached to this ancient port. The Poles of the twentieth century, with their passion for the sea, and their high ideals for their reborn state, and what it should become, are not prepared to allow themselves to be despoiled in Danzig of the rights they consider essential to them. They are unanimous on this point; they will not put up with any settlement which would not, in their opinion, appear likely to safeguard them.

LÉON NOËL.

"TO BE OR NOT TO BE"

GERMAN diplomacy did not hesitate to repeat the phrase about a "last claim"; but the French diplomatists were there to translate manœuvre into fact.

"There is a pretence," wrote M. Coulondre, "that only Danzig is claimed, and that this would be Germany's last claim. If one wishes to test the sincerity of this assertion, it is enough to question Germans outside official circles. There is nobody who doesn't smile at



[Associated Press

“It will be difficult to restrain the exasperation of the most ardent Nazis.” Polish prisoners under guard of a German soldier with charged rifle

such a question. As regards Poland, Germany wants—it is perfectly clear—a return to the frontiers of 1914. But Danzig is the point of least resistance, and at this point they are trying to repeat the manoeuvre of infiltration which succeeded so well with the Sudeten. They hope, in taking Danzig, to get the key which will open the Polish door.”

The French Consul at Danzig noted that a majority of the population of Danzig were against returning to the Reich. But “it will be difficult to restrain the exasperation of the most ardent Nazis.”

“In official circles,” wrote the French Chargé d’Affaires in Berlin, “the prospect of an Anglo-French intervention in favour of Poland arouses serious apprehensions. It exasperates the Führer, who is in a permanent rage nowadays.”

The lull did not last long. “For Poland,” observed the Chargé d’Affaires, “will arise the question of ‘to be or not to be.’”

The French Ambassador in Warsaw wrote:—

“In putting the question of Danzig in the first rank, Chancellor Hitler clearly reveals his tactics; he banks on the question seeming of insufficient interest in France and England to justify Polish resistance. . . . Actually, since the events of March, the Poles feel that the essential question is raised between themselves and the Reich. The question is . . . whether Poland will agree to become a vassal of the Reich . . . or join the common front against German imperialism.”

The German campaign which now broke out consisted of the same ingredients as had preceded the rape of Czechoslovakia; propaganda, militarization of the Free City, “incidents,” and a violent and (as the despatches prove) mendacious Press campaign.

Memory is short, but documents are clear. As Germany increased her claims, the French diplomats recorded each step and each contradiction.

By the middle of June, the French Ambassadors both in Warsaw and Berlin commented on the change.

"They no longer talk only of Danzig," wrote the French Ambassador in Warsaw. "On all occasions they insist on the impossibility of Germany's allowing the Corridor to exist any longer. The necessity to recover Upper Silesia is also brought up."

"Danzig is not an end for Herr Hitler," wrote M. Coulongre, "he has other objectives even in Poland itself, notably the Corridor and Silesia."

By August, the French Ambassador in Warsaw reported:—

"Germany no longer conceals her desire for a general revision of the eastern frontiers. Danzig is only an excuse."

Now Danzig was forgotten and an entirely new issue suddenly arose; the question of the German minorities. Only two weeks before the invasion of Poland, M. Coulongre wrote:—"Now the question of Danzig has dropped into the second rank. The problem of the German minorities, and indirectly of Germany's 1914 frontiers, is in the forefront."

Thus Germany's "last claim" was suddenly replaced by new claims; and these new claims led to war. Danzig had been, from start to finish, a pretext.

5. RUSSIA

WHEN Ribbentrop went to Paris to sign the Franco-German "declaration" of December 6, 1938, he told M. Bonnet that "the fight against Bolshevism was the essential basis . . . of the Rome-Berlin axis."

Hitler held the same views. M. Beck, the Polish Minister, after visiting Hitler in January 1939, told the French Ambassador in Warsaw: "I found the Chancellor calm, talking a lot as usual, but weighing his words. . . . Against Moscow, against Russia, and not only against Bolshevism, the Führer showed the same animosity as in the past."

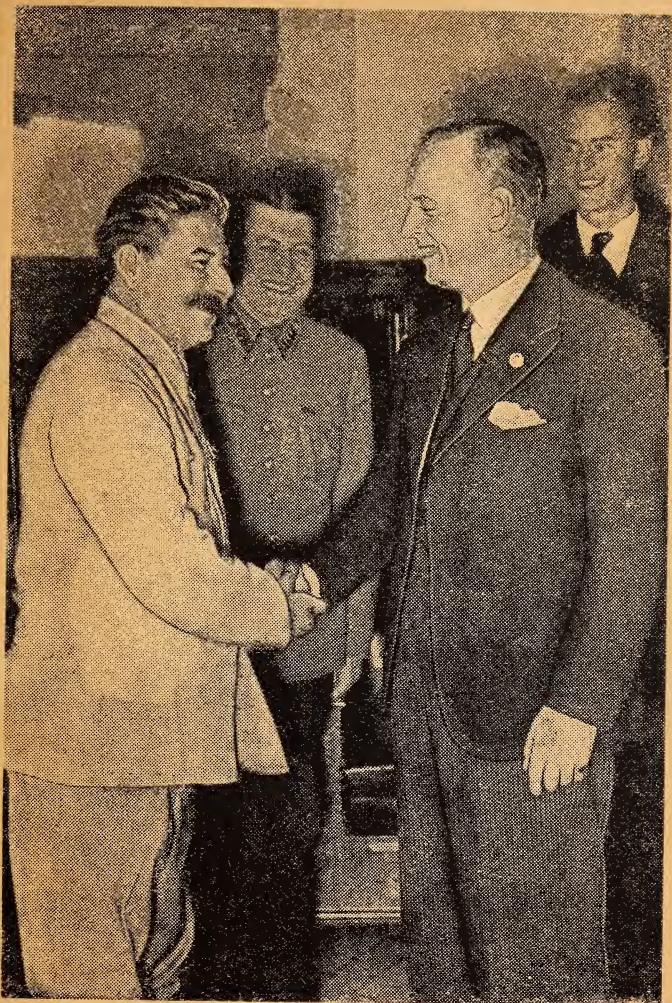
Ribbentrop said to M. Coulondre:—

"Our foreign policy has two objectives: 1. To fight Bolshevism by all means and notably by the anti-Comintern pact. 2. To recover our colonies. On the first point, believe me, the fight which we have begun is without mercy. Face to face with the Soviets we will stay firm as steel. Never will we come to an agreement with Bolshevik Russia."

Nor were these mere words. The "Yellow Book" reveals that in September 1938, January and March 1939, "the German Government proposed to Warsaw collaboration against the U.S.S.R. . . . These proposals went much further than Poland's adhesion to the anti-Comintern pact."

What, then, were the earliest signs of Germany's change of policy?

The "Yellow Book" contains a remarkable prophecy of the Russo-German *rapprochement* which reached Paris from Sofia as early as December 1938.



[*Planet News*

Ribbentrop said: "We will never come to an agreement with
Bolshevist Russia"

M. RISTELHUEBER, French Minister in Sofia,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Sofia, December 16, 1938.

IN the course of a recent conversation with the Prime Minister, the latter mentioned the great satisfaction he felt in consequence of the recent Franco-German declaration. He said that it had not come as a surprise to him. When Baron von Neurath passed through Sofia nearly two years ago, he stressed the very ardent desire of his Government to arrive at an understanding with France, as there were no questions at issue to divide the two countries. He had even confessed himself pained at the lack of enthusiasm with which Paris had responded to these advances.

As for Germany, while her desire for expansion eastwards was obvious, it was perhaps a mistake to imagine that her first objective would be South-Eastern Europe. It appeared to him that Poland was most menaced. The Polish-Soviet *rapprochement* constituted a defence against this danger. But the two Slav peoples hated each other so profoundly that their understanding could only be ephemeral and artificial. On the contrary, M. Kiosséïvanov did not consider as impossible an understanding between the U.S.S.R. and the Reich, especially if the Comintern agreed to tone down its propaganda. Such had always been the dream of a section of the German General Staff. In that event, a fourth partition of Poland would allow Germany to proceed with her forceful drive eastwards.

RISTELHUEBER.

The Prime Minister of Bulgaria's remarks, however, were in the nature of a forecast. It was not until the following May that M. Coulondre obtained evidence of a *rapprochement*. Then, in a revealing despatch, he told of the indiscretions of a certain "personality" who was in the habit of becoming excited in the course of a conversation.

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, May 7, 1939.

I TAKE the liberty of drawing the especial attention of Your Excellency to the information contained in the enclosed report, our informant being in a particularly good position to know the intentions of the Führer and of his principal lieutenants.

His new declarations may be summed up as follows:

(1) M. Beck's speech will in no way alter the situation. The Führer is determined to secure the return of Danzig to Germany, as well as the reunion of East Prussia to the Reich.

(2) The Führer is patient and cautious, and will not tackle the question in a direct way, for he knows that in future France and Britain would not give way, and that the coalition which he would have to confront would be too strong. He will go on manœuvring until his time comes.

(3) The Führer will come to an understanding to this effect with Russia. The day will come when he attains his aims by these means, without the Allies "having any reason, or even any intention, to intervene." It may be that we shall witness a fourth partition of Poland. In any case, "we shall soon see that something is brewing in the East."

(4) The equivocal attitude of Japan has contributed to Herr Hitler's orientation towards the U.S.S.R.

(5) When the Polish question has once been settled, and Germany's military supremacy definitely assured, Germany will be in a position to come to a conference.

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For the above reasons I believe that, taken as a whole, and under the reservations made at the conclusion of this letter, the enclosed indications may be considered to reflect fairly exactly Herr Hitler's designs and to reveal

the manoeuvres which we must be prepared to counter. As is his habit, my informant became very animated in the course of the conversation, and it is very likely that he finally said much more than he was authorized to tell us. Especially as regards Russia, one cannot help being struck by the coincidence between the intentions attributed to the Führer and the resignation of M. Litvinov.

In my opinion, two facts of primary importance can be inferred from this conversation.

The first is that Herr Hitler does not want to go to war with Poland under the prevailing conditions: this confirms the information which I have already sent to Your Excellency; it stresses the full significance of the recovery effected in Europe by France and Great Britain.

The second is an entirely new one: the new orientation of Germany towards Russia.

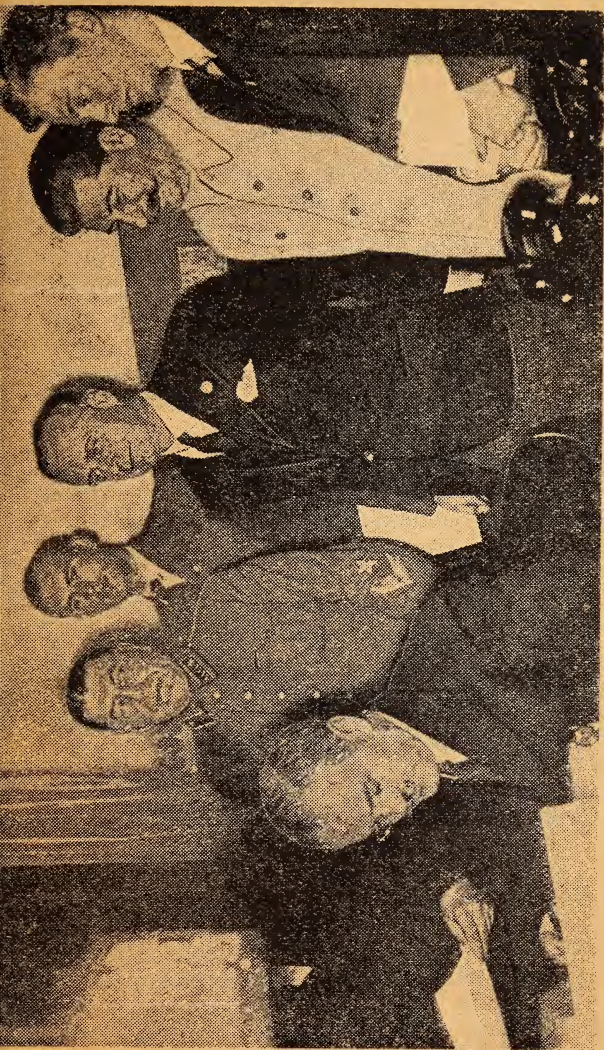
If the intention of the Führer really is to attempt a *rapprochement* with the U.S.S.R., it remains to be seen how he intends to exploit this new policy. In my opinion, he may hope to draw advantage from it in three different ways:

(1) By arriving at a more or less tacit agreement with the U.S.S.R. which would assure him of the benevolent neutrality of that country in the event of a conflict, perhaps even of her complicity in a partition of Poland.

(2) By bringing, through the mere threat of a better understanding with the U.S.S.R., pressure simultaneously to bear on Japan and on Poland in order to induce the former to sign a military alliance, and the latter to agree to the concessions he is asking for.

(3) By bringing the Western Powers, under the threat of collusion between Germany and Russia, to accept certain Soviet demands to which Poland and Rumania would be opposed, and thus to sow discord among the Allies.

On the other hand, it is not yet certain that Herr Hitler has already decided upon his line of conduct, and already made his choice between a real understanding with the U.S.S.R., or a simple diplomatic manoeuvre intended to



[Sport & General

"Face to face with the Soviets, we will stay firm as steel." Molotov signs

reverse the situation in his favour. One would be rather inclined to adopt the latter conjecture. For Herr Hitler finds it difficult to reconcile his own views, and those of his Party, with actual collusion with the Soviets, and to ignore completely the fact that not only the home but even the foreign policy of National-Socialism has been founded on an anti-Bolshevist ideology.

I need not stress the fact that the person concerned, who is in no respect an informer, intends, in his relations with us, to serve the cause of Germany. There is every reason to believe that apart from genuine indications, given deliberately or in the heat of the discussion, certain developments were deliberately designed to exercise pressure upon or to impress us. I should be inclined to place in this category the part of the conversation when he insisted on the state of exhaustion to which a prolonged semi-mobilization would reduce both ourselves and Poland. This may be the expression of a desire to see our military measures relaxed and to create a propitious moment for a new *coup*. The opinion held by the person concerned on the forces which from now onwards oppose the Reich and make the game a much too dangerous one for it, cannot fail to stimulate us to persevere in our military and diplomatic efforts and to remain permanently on the alert.

COULONDRE.

RÉSUMÉ of a conversation that took place on May 6 between a member of the Embassy (C) and one of the Führer's associates (X)

THE POLISH QUESTION: THE RUSSIAN FACTOR

"M. Beck's speech," X declared, "may appear very ingenious and well-founded, from the legal point of view.

"As to ourselves, we cannot, nevertheless, admit his contentions. In 1934, Poland signed a treaty of non-aggression with us. Now the reciprocal guarantee that Poland has just concluded with Great Britain places the former under the obligation of attacking us in the event

of the latter being in conflict with us. Does that not already contain a flagrant contradiction?

"Moreover, M. Beck in his speech has shown his bad faith. He was perfectly aware of Germany's attitude, which was clearly set forth to him by the Führer himself. What is more, M. Beck had declared that the requests of the German Government did not appear to him likely to raise any difficulties, and that he had undertaken to secure their acceptance by the Polish Government.

"Furthermore," continued X, "the Führer, as a man of action, scorns legal discussions; he remains on the plane of realities and necessities. He is firmly resolved, at all events, to settle the question of Danzig and of the reunion of East Prussia to the Reich, the solutions foreshadowed in the suggestions made by us at the beginning of the year representing a minimum."

"But then," C objected, "judging by the tone of your Press, this means war within a short time?"

"Not at all," replied X. "In this contest, as arranged by Great Britain, we are not the strongest. We realize perfectly that at present Great Britain and France are determined not to give way, especially France, for we are aware of M. Daladier's energy.

"Do you think that Hitler would be prepared to fight without holding all the trump cards? That would be contrary to his habit, which has brought him all his former successes without striking a single blow.

"Were you not struck, in his last speech, by the fact that he made no reference whatever to Russia? Have you not noticed the understanding manner in which this morning's newspapers—which, incidentally, had received precise instructions on the subject—speak of M. Molotov and of Russia? You must certainly have heard of certain negotiations that are going on, and of the journey of the Ambassador and the Military Attaché of the U.S.S.R. to Moscow; they had been received on the eve of their departure, the former by Herr von Ribbentrop, the latter by the Oberkommando of the Wehrmacht, and had been fully informed of the point of view of the Government

of the Reich. I can really tell you no more, but you will learn some day that something is being prepared in the East. (*Dass etwas im Osten im Gange ist.*)”

“How can you reconcile this new policy with the declaration made by the Führer in one of his speeches that there is only one country with which he could never reach an agreement—Soviet Russia?”

X, accompanying his answer by an evasive gesture, replied that it was not a question of haggling over words.

“When it is a case of carrying out a plan, there are no legal or ideological considerations that hold good. You are in a good position to know that a most Catholic King did not hesitate, in times gone by, to enter into an alliance with the Turks. Besides, are the two régimes actually different? Are they not very nearly identical in the realm of economics, although we, on our side, have in a certain measure maintained private enterprise? Briefly,” concluded X, “the situation may be summed up as follows: the Poles fancy that they can be insolent to us, as they feel strong in the support of France and Britain, and believe that they can count upon the material assistance of Russia. They are mistaken in their calculations: just as Hitler did not consider himself in a position to settle the question of Austria and of Czechoslovakia without Italy’s consent, he now would not dream of settling the German-Polish difference without Russia.”

Then X, who was getting more and more excited, declared: “There have already been three partitions of Poland; well, believe me, you will witness a fourth!

“In any case, we will arrange this matter in such a way that you will have neither reason nor even intention (*weder Grund noch sogar Absicht*) to intervene. It will not be in a month, nor even in two months’ time. Time is needed for adequate preparation. Hitler is not, as some of your journalists maintain, the man to take a sudden decision when he has a fit of temper.

“In home affairs, he knew how to wait until 1933 for the favourable opportunity to seize power. In foreign



[Planet News

"The fight against Bolshevism was the essential basis of the Rome-Berlin Axis." Ribbentrop signs

policy, all his successes are the result of careful reflection, of combinations studied down to their smallest details, and of the exploitation of all the mistakes and weaknesses of his opponents. In the matter of Poland, he will know how to bide his time.

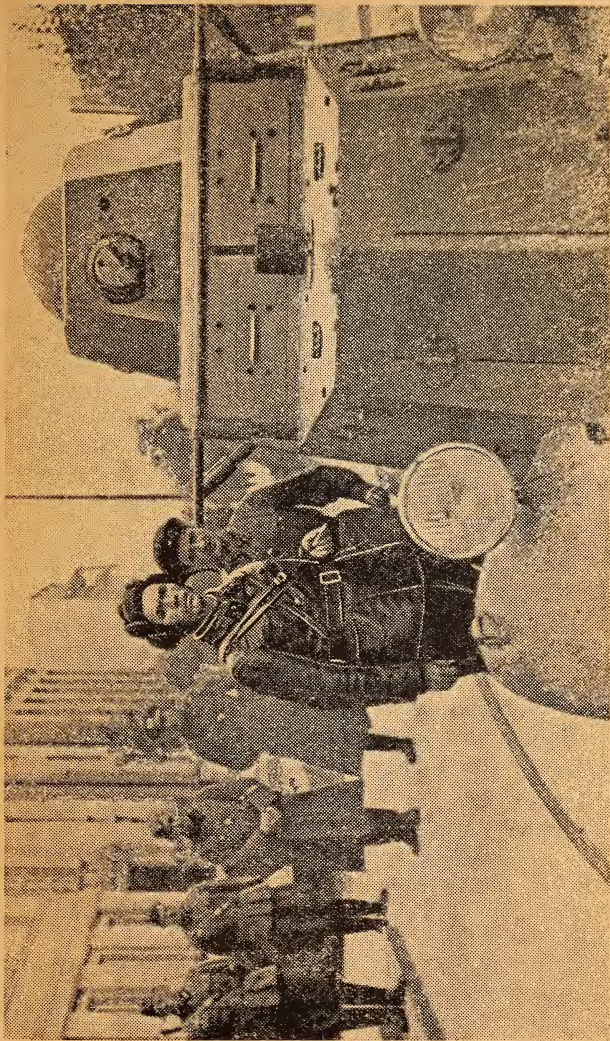
"I may add finally that, however unpopular a war on account of the Sudeten question might have been, a war against Poland would find favour with the masses, by reason of the inherent hatred of the German, and of the Prussian in particular, for the Pole. . . ."

*

* *

Henceforward, M. Coulondre sent repeated and insistent warnings about the imminence of that agreement between Russia and Germany which—three months earlier—Ribbentrop had declared to be so impossible.

"Fundamentally," wrote M. Coulondre, "in the mind of the German Foreign Minister, the Polish State cannot have a durable character. Sooner or later it must disappear, partitioned once more between Germany and Russia. In Herr von Ribbentrop's conception the idea of such a partition is intimately bound with that of a *rapprochement* between Berlin and Moscow. So far as the head of the Wilhelmstrasse is concerned, such a *rapprochement* must in the long run be indispensable and inevitable. In accordance with the nature of things, and with a tradition which is still very much alive in Germany, it would alone permit a durable settlement of the German-Polish dispute, that is to say, in conformity with the method already applied to Czechoslovakia, the liquidation of Poland. But above all, it would allow the leaders of the Reich to destroy British power. That is the principal objective which Herr von Ribbentrop is said to have set himself—the one aim, the realization of which he is said to pursue untiringly with the obstinacy of a fanatic."



[Planet News

The double invasion of Poland. A Russian armoured car reaches Brest-Litovsk.
German officers in the background

M. Coulondre remarked that "the speed and facility with which rumours of a Russo-German *rapprochement* were accepted in Germany after M. Litvinov's resignation, tend to appease any fears which Herr Hitler might have about the eventual reactions of German public opinion. It may indeed be that the partisans of a Russo-German *rapprochement* spread these rumours with a view to enlightening the Führer."

On June 13, M. Coulondre wrote:

"Danzig is, in Herr von Ribbentrop's eyes, a detail which does not interest him in itself. He regards the whole problem of Poland as raised. This problem might be solved . . . by an arrangement with Russia . . . Herr von Ribbentrop has not yet discarded the idea . . . of this solution, i.e., the destruction of Poland by a partition between the Reich and Russia. He will only discard it after the signature of an Anglo-Russian pact."

M. Coulondre noted that the newspapers and the Führer himself avoided any "diatribes against Bolshevism" on the return of the "Condor" Legion which had fought in Spain. This Legion must have been bewildered to find itself greeted, on the contrary, with maledictions against the "democracies"—"not a word about 'Bolshevism' or 'Communism.'"

On July 4 the French Consul-General at Hamburg wired:—

"Business circles in Hamburg, which are usually well-informed, believe that if an agreement is not soon reached between London, Paris and Moscow, the Soviet Government is ready to sign a five-year pact of non-aggression with the Reich.

"Anxiety has been felt for some time in these same circles about the rapid evolution of the National-Socialist system in the direction of autarchy and collectivization. There is an unconcealed fear that a political co-operation between Berlin and Moscow may increase this tendency. Moreover, it is thought that such co-operation would

increase the risks of a German attack on Poland and would precipitate a general war."

Parallel, indeed, with the Russo-German *rapprochement* went the German preparations for war. The "Yellow Book" shows that a secret mobilization began in Germany at about this time, and culminated on August 18.

On August 15 Ribbentrop boasted to Count Ciano about the progress of the Russo-German commercial talks; and on the 21st he told his Italian colleague that he was flying to Moscow to sign a pact of non-aggression with Stalin. On August 24 the Russo-German pact was signed.

The "Yellow Book" records two comments by Hitler. In a personal message to M. Daladier he said: "I shall not attack France, but if she enters the conflict I shall carry matters to a conclusion. I have just, as you know, concluded a pact with Moscow which is not merely theoretical but, I may say, positive."

In his speech to the Reichstag on September 1, Hitler said: "You know that Russia and Germany are ruled by two different doctrines, but between the two countries there was only one question to settle. Germany does not intend to export her doctrine, nor does Russia. . . . This decision marks a turning-point in world history of unheard-of and definitive importance."

Thus "the essential basis of the Axis" and "the first objective of German foreign policy" disappeared into limbo.

6. LAST DAYS

ON August 20 a simultaneous alarm came from Warsaw and Berlin.

M. LÉON NOËL, French Ambassador in Warsaw,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Warsaw, August 20, 1939.

(Received by air at 11 a.m.)

FROM a very reliable source I learn that Wilhelmstrasse circles are gravely concerned by the turn of events, and believe that Herr Hitler is determined to "settle the Danzig question" before the 1st September.

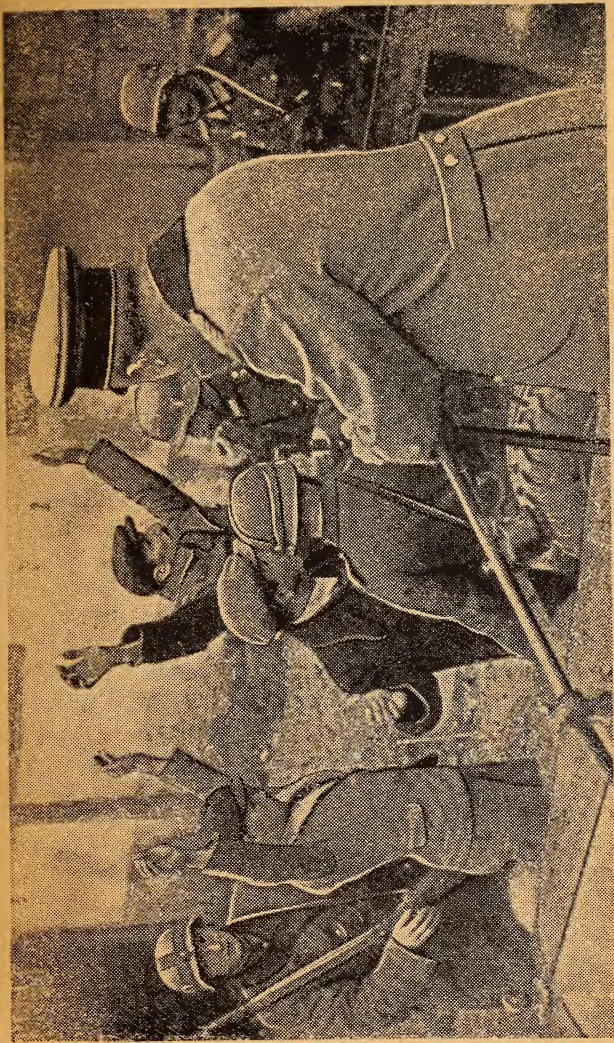
LÉON NOËL.

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, August 20, 1939. 12.25 p.m.

(Received at 1.40 p.m.)

ONE of my colleagues heard yesterday evening from high officials of the Wilhelmstrasse some very pessimistic views on the development of the international situation. In their opinion, German honour is at stake in Danzig and Germany cannot retreat: they saw no hope of avoiding war. As to a military intervention by Great Britain in favour of Poland, they did not believe in it. "Why should England intervene for Danzig, after allowing the Reich to seize Austria, the Sudeten territory, the Czech regions and Memel?"

These German high officials, whose remarks also showed an extreme animosity towards the British, behaved as if, while personally feeling deep anxiety and



[Associated Press

German troops search Polish inhabitants

grave apprehension for the future, they were trying hard to impress on my colleague the imminence of a conflict on which Germany was resolved.

COULONDRE.

ON August 21 M. Coulondre reported that German troop concentrations had begun.

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, August 21, 1939. 1.50 a.m.
(Received at 7 a.m.)

A VERY important new fact in the military sphere, namely, the beginning of a concentration of German forces, is brought to light by the latest information collected, particularly after to-day's investigations.

There are sure signs that the units of the Berlin armoured division are on a war footing and that they will probably move to-night. Many roads in the eastern direction are under military guard; others have been prepared for troop movements. To-day, some tanks have been sent off by train.

From Vienna comes news of an intense military activity since August 19. At Bremen, the 22nd Division is mobilized to war strength and ready to leave.

Mobilization has already been carried out on a very large scale: but it is not possible to estimate even approximately the actual figures. I do not consider exaggerated the number given by a foreign source, according to which the land forces alone amount to 2,400,000 men. A very large proportion of reservists has also been called up for the Air Force.

It may be that, by all these preparations, Germany only means to support the political manoeuvre which is being carried out by her at present. But it will become increasingly difficult for her to stop on the slope where Germany now finds herself.

Considering as I do that nothing should be left undone

which might prevent Germany from proceeding further, I feel it my duty to stress once more the urgent and imperative necessity of taking the necessary measures, both as regards the calling up of reserves and the mobilization of industry, so that our preparations shall remain level with those of Germany.

Even more than a military necessity, this is, in my opinion, a political necessity.

What constitutes one of the gravest dangers of war at the present time is the doubt which the Government of the Reich may still have concerning the intentions of France and Britain to lend Poland their support.

If we prove by our military and other measures that we are actually getting ready to fulfil our obligations, we shall thereby make use of the best possible method to dissipate this doubt. On the other hand, the Third Reich would find dangerous encouragement in the thought that a disparity in its favour may exist between the German preparations and our own.

COULONDRE.

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, August 21, 1939. 5.29 p.m.
(Received 7 p.m.)

OWING to the large numbers of troops moving eastward during the whole of yesterday and the heavy traffic last night on the Magdeburg-Berlin motor road, it is no longer possible to doubt that the concentration of forces is in progress.

However, Germany has not officially mobilized, and is supposed to be using the army and calling up reserves for a period of training; the reserves are being called up by individual summons and not by proclamation.

I think that for our part it would be best to avoid any ostentatious action while taking all necessary steps. The measures we adopt will be all the more effective for being discreet. The German Government will always get to

know enough about them to realize what they mean. It will be able neither to consider our attitude as a provocation, nor our preparations as a piece of bluff.

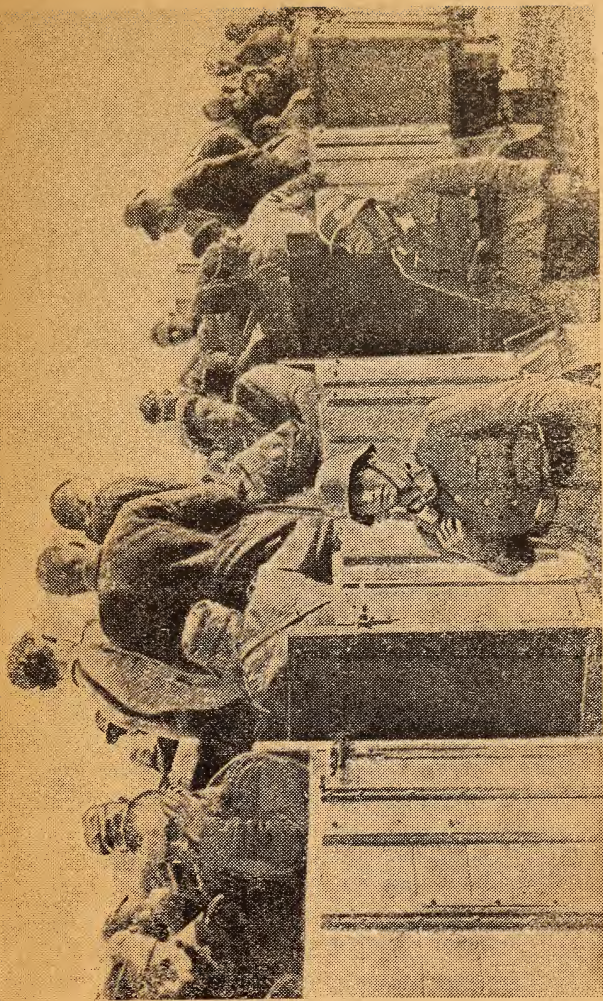
COULONDRE.

ON the same day M. Coulondre reported that he had heard from a reliable source that the concentration of forces would be complete within two or three days, and that Hitler would remain on the defensive in the West. "The Führer would merely have the Siegfried line manned: he would not declare war on France or on Britain, and would remain on the defensive. Even should the Western Powers formally declare war on Germany, Herr Hitler would wait to be attacked and avoid taking any initiative. He is said to hope that the French and British Governments will come to see the futility of any intervention and will then accept the situation created *de facto* on the eastern frontiers." On August 22 the French Consul-General at Hamburg heard of a "lightning blow" to be delivered in Poland.

M. GARREAU, French Consul-General in Hamburg,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Hamburg, August 22, 1939. 4.10 p.m.
(Received 6 p.m.)

I LEARN on good authority that the German Government hopes, by a lightning attack, to dispose of Poland before the end of the month. The Reich seems to be convinced that Great Britain and France, equally disconcerted by the Russian attitude, will not move. The Reich believes that Moscow is preparing a great political upheaval which would tend to bring the ideologies of the two totalitarian régimes into harmony.

The rumour that the offensive against Poland would be launched on August 22 has been circulating in Hamburg for several days. A great number of railway employees have been ordered to report in various Polish towns, notably in Warsaw, Torun and Poznan, on a date



[Associated Press

Polish prisoners disappear in trucks . . . whither? Thousands have disappeared into slavery, concentration camps, or were simply murdered

which would be notified towards the end of the month. From this it would seem that the occupation of these centres by the German Army was expected very soon.

Many motor-cars have been requisitioned in Hamburg. They are at once given military numbers and repainted grey.

The departure of the 20th Mechanized Division for the Polish frontier has taken place within the last 48 hours; these troops left Hamburg partly by train and partly in three motor convoys which set out respectively for Rostock, Ludwigslust and Lübeck.

GARREAU.

ON August 23 Gauleiter Forster was illegally declared "head of the Danzig State"; and the news of the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact had been made known on the night of the 21st/22nd September.

In the despatches which follow it is again and again proved that the unity of Anglo-French diplomacy was used throughout the Polish "crisis" for the double purpose of giving prudent counsel to the Poles and firm warnings to the Germans.

On August 24, for example, the French Ambassador begged the Polish authorities "not to take any initiative which would involve the irreparable" at Danzig. He again drew M. Beck's attention "to the imperious necessity to avoid incidents and imprudences" later on the same day. The warning was repeated to Marshal Rydz-Smigly on August 25, when the Germans announced that certain "incidents" had taken place. These "incidents," moreover, were subsequently disproved.

That the Polish Government accepted these counsels of moderation in the spirit in which they were offered, and resolved to act upon them, is shown by many despatches of which the following is one.

M. LÉON NOËL, French Ambassador in Warsaw,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Warsaw, August 26, 1939. 12.55 a.m.
(Received at 4.30 a.m.)

COUNT SZEMBECK has confirmed both to my British colleague and myself, the reply given me by M. Beck in the course of our conversation about Danzig late last night; the Polish Government fully appreciates the motives and the excellent grounds for our recommendations and will do all in its power to avoid confronting us with a *fait accompli*: it will consult with Great Britain and with ourselves before making any important decision; it will not reply to attacks on its rights in customs and transport matters except by suitable retaliatory measures of a non-military character; only in the event of a situation arising, in circumstances at present impossible to predict, which would be so serious that any delay would appear dangerous, does the Polish Government reserve the right to act immediately, having informed us, but without undertaking to consult us beforehand.

I replied to Count Szembeck that, in so far as this last part of his statement was concerned, I could only regard it as a reservation made with a view to some wholly unpredictable eventuality, and volunteered, so to speak, to leave no doubts.

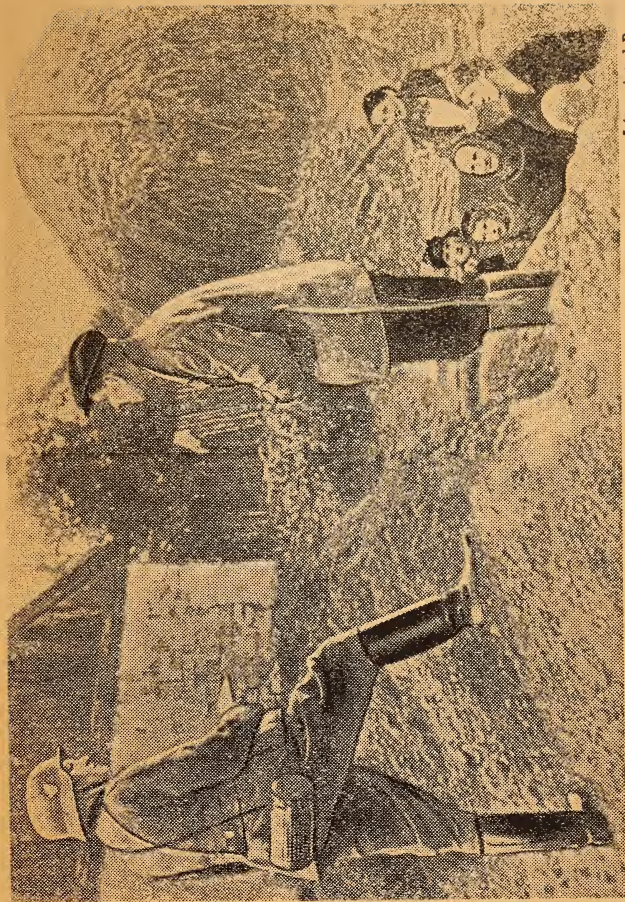
LÉON NOËL.

THE "Yellow Book" shows that the sole responsibility lay with Germany for the fact that recourse was had to violence instead of to one of the several means of consultation which were suggested by the Allies and Neutrals alike. It is significant, for example, that whereas both Poland herself and her Allies are revealed as accepting and sending favourable replies to the messages of President Roosevelt, of the Kings of Italy and Belgium, of His Holiness the Pope, of the Oslo group of Powers, Germany refused to take these appeals into consideration.

The German attack seems to have been planned for the night of August 25, and then to have been postponed—possibly because the Allies did not react in the docile way which had been foreseen by Ribbentrop to the Russo-German Pact. An intensive and last-hour attempt was then made to divide the Allies, Great Britain from France and Great Britain and France alike from Poland. These attempts were met by firm warnings by both Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier that the Allies would carry out their obligations.

These warnings were coupled, however, throughout these days by constructive attempts to find a pacific solution. Great Britain and France suggested jointly or separately a truce, the opening of direct negotiations between Poland and Germany, and finally general negotiations; but Germany, these despatches show, stood firm—Hitler was determined to get what he wanted by force. There is no other explanation of the negotiations which follow.

Poland, which was subsequently accused by Germany of "intransigence," accepted one suggestion after another. The Polish Government agreed to direct negotiations, agreed to the presence of neutral observers, agreed to the principle of a possible exchange of populations. All these suggestions came to nothing; but this was not Poland's fault. "I want Danzig to be returned to the Reich," said Hitler, sweeping aside the idea of discussions on this point. As M. Coulondre observed: "He had taken up his position." A ray of hope appeared when Germany agreed at the eleventh hour to direct negotiations with a Polish plenipotentiary if such a plenipotentiary appeared in Berlin within 24 hours. The phrase had an uneasily reminiscent sound: it recalled the visits of Dr. von Schuschnigg to Berchtesgaden and of Dr. Hacha to Berlin. Poland finally agreed that her Ambassador in Berlin should be given power to negotiate. But in the meantime, Germany's "claims" had increased in such a way that they must be utterly unacceptable to the Poles.



[Associated Press

Polish peasant women and children cower in a ditch while questioned by a
German soldier

M. LÉON NOËL, French Ambassador in Warsaw,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Warsaw, August 30, 1939.
(Received by telephone at 11.20 a.m.)

GOING far beyond his demands of March 21, the German Chancellor to-day claims, besides Danzig, the Corridor, which is territory racially Polish, and also Gdynia, which is a Polish creation. Furthermore, by claiming an economic agreement and "the elimination of any possibility of incidents with Poland," he is opening the door to unspecified demands.

The reservation which he makes with regard to the establishment of an international guarantee recalls the one to which last autumn he subordinated the guarantee to be given to the Czechoslovak State for its new frontier. According to all appearances, he expects a refusal from the Soviet. It is, moreover, impossible to imagine that such terms, which would mark the beginning of Poland's enslavement, would be accepted by that country.

LÉON NOËL.

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, August 30, 1939.
(Received by telephone at 1.30 p.m.)

THE text of the German reply which was delivered yesterday to Sir Neville Henderson has just been communicated to me by the British Embassy.

It is brutal and reads more like a *diktat* imposed upon a conquered country than an agreement to negotiate with a sovereign State.

Even if the conversations should be broken off almost as soon as begun, I nevertheless consider that Poland should, at least to start with, agree to open them through the intermediary of her Ambassador in Berlin.

COULONDRE.

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, August 31, 1939.

(Received by telephone at 11.30 p.m.)

WE are faced with a new manœuvre to make Poland appear as if she is trying to evade any attempt at a peaceful settlement.

In order to frustrate this manœuvre and to throw into relief the method used, it is enough to emphasize that, despite the tone of the German note, the conditions which it embodied and the ultimatum-like form in which it was couched, the Polish Government has not sought to avoid the conversation, but has on the contrary given its agreement in principle in the communication which M. Lipski made to Herr von Ribbentrop.

COULONDRE.

THE despatches prove that Germany's eventual pretence that Poland rejected a "16-point" settlement by refusing to send a plenipotentiary was a piece of blatant hypocrisy, for the simple reason that such a settlement never reached the Polish authorities. The "Yellow Book" shows that the draconian terms alluded to, above, were indeed rejected by Poland, but that these were not the "final" terms, contained in sixteen points, which the Poles were accused by the German radio on the very eve of hostilities of rejecting. These terms had only been read aloud to Sir Nevile Henderson by Ribbentrop, who refused to give the British Ambassador a copy.

Ribbentrop finally saw the Polish Ambassador at 8 p.m. on August 31. At this interview he never even mentioned the "sixteen-point" terms. Yet, an hour later, on the German wireless, Poland was said to have rejected these terms! It is relevant to remark that Germany may have been, as a matter of fact, hardly free to negotiate with Poland, as the partition of Poland had already been decided upon between the Germans and the Russians. This is suggested by an earlier despatch of M. Coulondre.

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Berlin, August 24, 1939.
(Received August 25 at 12.30 p.m.)

NEWS has reached me that official circles in Berlin consider that, by the Pact of August 23, Germany and Russia have agreed to settle between themselves, not only the matter of Poland, but all questions concerning Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and this to the exclusion of all other Powers.

From rumours circulating, it would seem that it is expected here that the first consequence of the German-Russian Pact will be the partition of Poland.

According to a statement attributed to State Secretary Lammers, Berlin and Moscow have decided to establish a common frontier on the Vistula. Russia would receive free port facilities at Danzig.

According to other rumours, Poland is to be reduced to the role of a buffer state; Lithuania would play the same part and would recover Wilna.

The provinces of Bohemia and Moravia would receive a limited independence and would act, so to speak, as a bridge between the Slav and Germanic worlds.

The Reich and Soviet Russia would also revise by mutual agreement the frontiers of the Baltic States and of Rumania.

I pass on this information with reserve, while pointing out that it probably corresponds with certain cherished hopes on the German side. In this respect, the greatest importance is attributed by political circles in Berlin to Article 3, which provides for a permanent consultation between the two Governments.

On the other hand, they seem to expect Poland to capitulate, and to attach great importance to Germany's not appearing to be the aggressor.

COULONDRE.



[Associated Press

M. Beck was right in "wondering"

THE "negotiations with a Polish plenipotentiary" were, in fact, a bluff which foretold the early opening of hostilities, as M. Beck himself quickly noted.

M. LÉON NOËL, French Ambassador in Warsaw,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Warsaw, August 31, 1939.

(Received by telephone at 12 midnight)

A BULLETIN on Polish-German relations has just been broadcast by Germany. In this connection M. Beck has sent me, by Count Lubienski, the following message intended for Your Excellency:

At 1 p.m. to-day M. Lipski asked to be received by Herr von Ribbentrop. The conversation must have taken place at 6 p.m. M. Beck has no information about what had happened as communications between Berlin and Warsaw have been cut off. But the German radio bulletin is at pains to point out that negotiations have been broken off.

M. Beck is anxious to emphasize all the efforts which the Polish Government has made to facilitate the work of conciliation which had been undertaken. In addition he reserves judgment on the German communication and wonders whether we are faced with a last attempt at blackmail or an act preliminary to the opening of hostilities. . . .

LÉON NOËL.

M. BECK was right in "wondering." . . . A despatch followed eight hours later to say that hostilities had begun.

M. LÉON NOËL, French Ambassador in Warsaw,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Warsaw, September 1, 1939.

(Received by telephone at 8.20 a.m.)

THE Polish Army Headquarters report that German troops debouching from Danzig, crossed the Eastern

frontier of the Corridor this morning from 4 o'clock onwards, in particular near Kartuzy and Gardeja. German aeroplanes have attacked the Polish town of Tczew to the south of Danzig.

Aggression by German armed bands and also flights of aircraft have also been reported at various points of the Silesian frontier.

LÉON NOËL.

M. LÉON NOËL, French Ambassador in Warsaw,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Warsaw, September 1, 1939.
(Received by telephone at 8.30 a.m.)

ACCORDING to the latest information just received by the Polish Army Headquarters the German attack is general on all frontiers.

In East Prussia, in South Poznania, in Silesia and on the Slovak frontier, there has been bombing without warning at numerous points.

In addition, Danzig has proclaimed its *Anschluss* with the Reich.

LÉON NOËL.

THE "Yellow Book" now gives a full account of the attempt by Italy at the last moment to prevent war by calling a conference to which, Italy agreed, Poland should also be summoned.

Great Britain and France wired acceptance of Italy's suggestion; but German troops had in the meantime invaded Poland, and it became manifest that the necessary preliminary to any peaceful discussion—the withdrawal of German troops, was now out of the question.

The German "word of honour," however, was magnificently epitomized up to the very end by Ribbentrop's remark on September 1, while German troops were invading Poland: "There has been on the German side no aggression against Poland."

M. Daladier's reply was simple. In the French Chamber of Deputies on the following day, he said: "Poland has been the object of the most unjust and brutal aggression. The countries which guaranteed her independence are bound to intervene in her defence. Great Britain and France are not countries which repudiate their signature."



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